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King visits Prime Ministry

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday visited the Prime Ministry where he met with Prime Minister Shafiq al-Zaid.

The king was accompanied by his sons, Prince Hashem and Prince Zein, and his daughter, Princess Haya.

The king's visit was part of a series of engagements aimed at strengthening the ties between the monarchy and the government.

After the meeting, the king proceeded to the Royal Palace to receive a delegation of foreign dignitaries.

The king's visit to the Prime Ministry was a significant event in the Jordanian political calendar.

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Jordan Times

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جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي.

Khoury condemns ban on Adonis

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese writer Elias Khouri on Saturday condemned a decision by the Syrian writers' union to expel leading Arab author Adonis for backing a normalisation with Israel. The union barred Adonis on January 28 because he took part in a U.N.-organised forum of intellectuals in 1993 in Spain which was also organised by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Mr. Khouri, who is well-known for his anti-Israeli views, said the union's decision originated in "methods which we believed were abolished forever and which have only led the cultural collapse." This decision "provokes fears, not for Adonis, whose cultural support is intact, but for the kind of struggle to be waged against Israeli hegemony." Mr. Khouri wrote in the daily Al Nahar, Adonis, whose real name is Ali Ahmad Said, is a Lebanese of Syrian origin who lives in Paris. He refused to comment on the union's decision.

Arafat to focus on settlements in talks with Rabin — PNA

Israelis seal off Jericho from W. Bank

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will raise the issue of Jewish settlement expansion on the West Bank when he meets with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin next Thursday, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) said Saturday.

"The most important issue is that of settlements," said Mohammad Zuhdi Nashashibi, finance minister in the PNA.

"It is the main obstacle and must remain on the agenda until the problem is settled," he said after the weekly Palestinian cabinet meeting here.

The Rabin-Arafat meeting was announced after an unprecedented Arab-Israeli summit in Cairo held last Thursday to revive the faltering peace process.

The expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem has angered the Palestinians.

Palestinian Economy Minister Ahmad Qouria said Saturday that "the peace process is without hope if colonisation does not stop."

In a statement after the cabinet meeting, the PNA said that the Palestinian Authority charged Israel with "delaying the implementation of the interim autonomy accord and going back on its commitments under the declaration of principles on autonomy, which is endangering the peace process."

The Palestinian Authority understands Israel's security needs... but that does not mean halting implementation of the accord," said the statement carried by the Palestinian news agency Wafa.

It said Israel had refused to discuss the issues of settlements, Palestinian elections, army redeployment, Jerusalem or prisoners, which Mr. Arafat raised during the Cairo summit.

Talks on extending autonomy are to resume Monday in Cairo.

Israel froze negotiations following a double suicide bombing near the coastal town of Netanya which killed 21 Israelis on Jan. 22.

Israel's army sealed off the Palestinian self-rule enclave of Jericho from the rest of the West Bank on Saturday.

Israeli military sources said the Israeli army had "for security reasons" closed off the main road leading to the Jericho self-rule area. They would not elaborate.

"The Jericho area is like a prison. (This) will support the opponents of peace and puts the Palestinian-Israeli agreements in question," said Jibril Al Rajoub, the PNA's security chief in the enclave.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said the PNA's security chief in the enclave, Jibril Al Rajoub, must do more to thwart militant groups opposed to the 1993 Israeli-PLO peace accord.

Mr. Peres said he hoped the closure order, which prevents Palestinian labourers from working in Israel, would be removed within the next week.

But he told Israel radio

that Mr. Arafat must clamp down more on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which claimed responsibility for the Jan. 22 suicide bombing in central Israel. Israel sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip in response to the attack.

"Maybe he didn't do enough but he has arrested seven of the heads of the Jihad organisation," said Mr. Peres.

"Well, it's a beginning that I wouldn't like to overlook though we need a little bit more than that," he added.

PNA member Yasser Abed-Rabbo said Palestinians would reassess the peace process if they did not get results soon.

"If the Rabin-Arafat summit on Thursday does not resolve disputed issues, we will convene a large Palestinian meeting to ask the strategic question — is this peace process feasible?" Mr. Abed Rabbo said.

Mr. Rabin and Mr. Arafat will meet at the Erez checkpoint dividing Gaza and Israel. They have met frequently in recent months without visible progress on the issues that divide them.

PNA police have released two prominent Islamic Jihad members but continued a sweep of other radicals following anti-Israeli attacks, members of the group said Saturday.

The two members released were Abdullah Al Zag and Omar Forah. However, Islamic Jihad leader Abdullah Al

U.S. carriers to be named after Truman, Reagan

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Navy's new nuclear-powered aircraft carriers will carry the names of two former presidents, according to a report by the Associated Press.

The Navy announced Saturday that the first of the new carriers, the USS George Eastman (SSBN-601), will be named after President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The second carrier, the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (SSBN-618), will be named after President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The Navy said the new carriers will be the first to carry the names of presidents since the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (SSBN-583) was named after President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1959.

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India bans sale of human organs

NEW DELHI (AP) — The Indian government on Saturday banned the sale of human organs, a move aimed at curbing the trade in organs for transplant.

The ban follows the arrest of a man in New Delhi who was accused of selling his kidney to a foreigner.

The government said the ban was necessary to protect the health of citizens and to prevent the exploitation of the poor.

The ban applies to the sale of any human organ, including kidneys, livers, and hearts.

The government said it would take strict action against anyone who violated the ban.

Turkey blasts French release of suspect

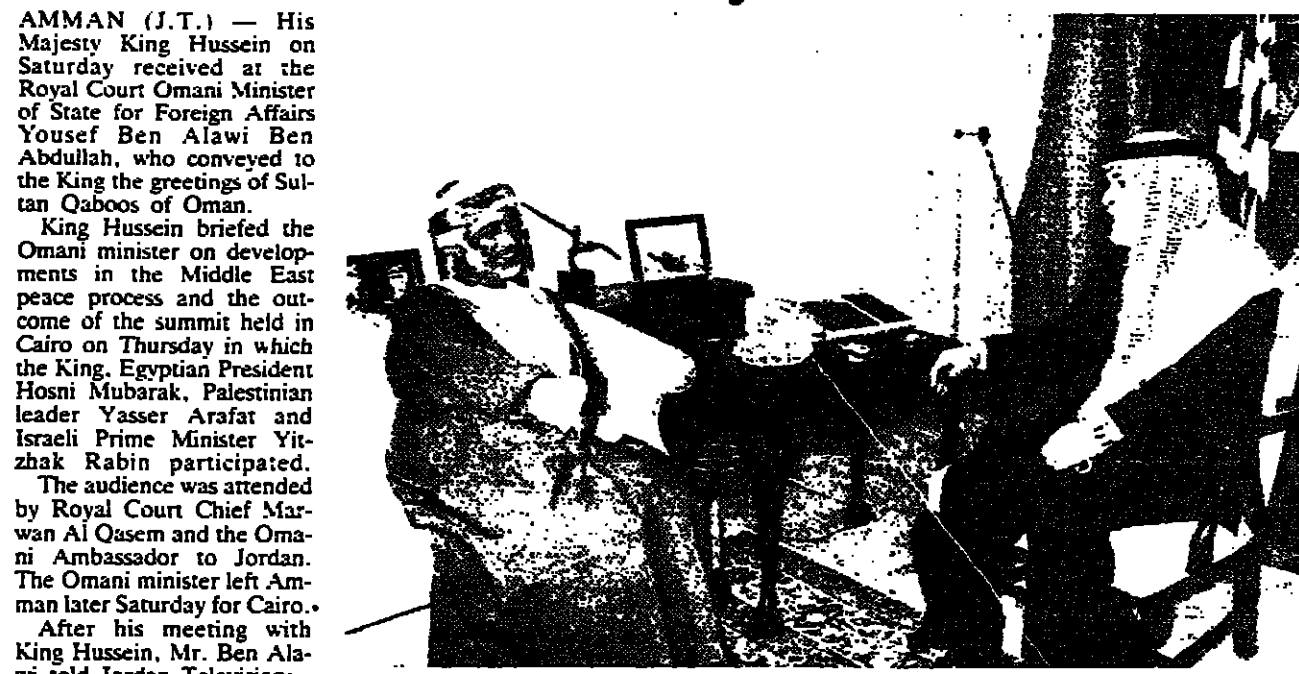
ISTANBUL (AP) — Turkey's interior minister harshly criticised France on Saturday for releasing a suspected terrorist who had been arrested in Turkey.

The minister said the release of the suspect was a "serious setback" for the fight against terrorism.

The suspect, a French national, was arrested in Turkey in December 1994 and was accused of being involved in a series of bombings in France.

The French government said it had released the suspect because it was not wanted in France.

King meets Ben Alawi, briefs him on outcome of four-way Cairo summit



His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday receives Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Ben Alawi (Petra photo)

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday received at the Royal Court Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Ben Alawi Ben Abdullah, who conveyed to the King the greetings of Sultan Qaboos of Oman.

King Hussein briefed the Omani minister on developments in the Middle East peace process and the outcome of the summit held in Cairo on Thursday in which the King, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin participated.

The audience was attended by Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem and the Omani Ambassador to Jordan. The Omani minister left Amman later Saturday for Cairo.

After his meeting with King Hussein, Mr. Ben Alawi told Jordan Television: "I had the honour of meeting with His Majesty King Hussein and conveyed to him the greetings of Sultan Qaboos Ben Sa'ed of Oman and reviewed with him bilateral relations."

"I was briefed by His Majesty King Hussein on various issues of concern to Jordan, Oman, the Arab and Islamic worlds and found that the views of Jordan and Oman were identical."

The Omani official said that he found the two countries were determined to develop bilateral relations in various fields, especially scientific and technical fields.

He said he hoped that efforts exerted by King Hussein, Sultan Qaboos and other Arab leaders to clear the Arab atmosphere and mend inter-Arab differences would succeed and that the Middle East peace process would come to a successful end.

The two sides exchanged ideas about regional and international issues of mutual concern and ways to reestablish solidarity among Arab states as well as issues related to the Middle East process.

Mr. Ben Alawi said Friday his visit to Jordan was part of continuous consultations and coordination between the two countries on various issues of common interest.

In Cairo, Mr. Ben Alawi will meet with his counterparts from the other three summit participants.

(Continued on page 7)

Arafat can keep Gaza — Netanyahu

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's right-wing opposition Likud Party said Saturday it would allow Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat to keep the Gaza Strip but would cut the territory off from Israel if it won the next elections.

"Arafat can keep Gaza, but we will have nothing to do with him and we will not let him create a Palestinian state in the West Bank at any price," Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu told Israeli radio.

"We will surround the Gaza Strip with fences and guard posts to prevent terrorist infiltrations and we will replace Gaza labourers with tens of thousands of foreign workers," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Although his party had been opposed to an Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian towns in the Gaza Strip in May last year, it did not plan to send the army back to the territory, he said. It ruled out dismantling Jewish settlements there, however.

"The basic problem is the West Bank and the only viable solution is an autonomous Palestinian entity which would allow the inhabitants to run their own affairs," he said.

Mr. Netanyahu said he had been in contact with influential Palestinians who "privately" approved the plan.

CAIRO (Agencies) — The foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) were meeting here Saturday in a bid to adopt a joint position on Palestinians displaced by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war ahead of talks with Israel.

Palestinian International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath said a joint Arab agreement was needed on a timetable for the return of around one million Palestinians displaced by the war.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said a meeting with Israeli officials would take place in the last week of February in Amman.

The talks Saturday were attended by Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the political department of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Most of the displaced, who totalled 350,000 just after the war, live in Jordan.

Under the PLO-Israeli declaration of principles signed in September 1993, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Israel are to agree on arrangements for the return of those displaced from the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 1967.

The meeting began after the sunset meal with which Muslims break the Ramadan fast.

Experts met last month and said they agreed on some outstanding issues concerning the return of displaced Palestinians, the Palestinian source told Reuters.

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Chechens down Russian warplane

MESKER-YURT, Russia (Agencies) — Chechen fighters Saturday shot down a Russian warplane for the first time as Russian fighter jets continued bombing Chechen targets in the capital Grozny.

The fighters said they had shot down a Sukhoi-25 with machine-gun fire as it launched a low-altitude attack against a target in eastern Chechnya, and had captured the pilot after he ejected.

Footage by the independent NTV channel showed parts of the blackened fuselage and turbines of the aircraft scattered in a field about five kilometres southeast of Grozny.

Though Chechen irregulars have shot down Russian helicopters before, it was the first time they had brought down one of the fighter planes.

Many civilians have died in Russian air raids on Grozny and the downing of the SU-25 was a coup for the Chechens.

On Friday SU-25s carried out at least four bombing raids over roughly the same area, hitting parts of the southeast of the city in a bid to help Russian forces on the ground make a decisive breakthrough.

Chechen irregulars, outnumbered and greatly outgunned, have waged an effective hit-and-run campaign from Grozny's basements and backstreets to defy Russian plans to seize the city.

Russian forces, sent into the mainly Muslim North Caucasus territory on Dec. 11 to break the separatist leadership's drive for independence, launched an offensive on New Year's Eve to take the capital.

But though they have battered it with air attacks and shells and seized control of the presidential palace, Chechen guerrillas still control sections of the city south and southeast of the Sunzha River.

A member of the NTV crew said the plane was brought down by anti-aircraft fire at about 10:30 a.m. (0730 GMT). Residents in the area had said the body of the dead pilot, an unnamed major, had been taken away.

The NTV footage showed a Chechen civilian holding up a bright orange parachute and harness from the wreckage. Smaller pieces of debris were scattered over a two-kilometre area.

Looting and locusts in Somalia as U.N. quits

MOGADISHU (Agencies) — Somalis looted the abandoned U.N. headquarters in Mogadishu and giant clouds of locusts swarmed in the northwest of the country as U.N. civilian workers stepped up their evacuation plans on Friday.

U.N. spokesman George Bennett said local Somali leaders had reported seeing three locust swarms each three kilometres long rolling across the bush. Locusts can consume every bit of vegetation in their path.

In Mogadishu, women and children joined crowds stripping down the 160-acre complex that was the nerve centre of U.N. operations for the last two years. It was finally deserted by peacekeepers on Wednesday and promptly ransacked.

"It's the busiest street in Mogadishu," said one witness, as people trotted out of the compound, ringed by razor-wire and sandbags, carrying toilets, basins, doors and windows.

The wholesale destruction of the complex, on which the U.N. spent \$160 million — a drop in the ocean for a mission that cost \$1.5 billion a year — has clearly disgusted the United Nations and made it bring evacuating plans forward.

A statement by the U.N.'s special envoy, Victor Ghebo, on Thursday noted the systematic looting of the complex and also mentioned the fighting between rival clan militias for control of a building vacated by the U.N. Development Programme.

"It is clear that pledges by Somali leaders to keep these areas free of fighting and looting have not been honoured," Mr. Ghebo said. As a result, the statement said, expatriate civilian staff would leave earlier than planned.

Somalis fired two mortar bombs which slammed into the sea port, one of them at the docks close to where ships are moored, on Thursday. There were no casualties but it was the first attack of its kind for months.

Hundreds of foreign civilians, who once hoped to recreate a government and state institutions in a famine-stricken country which has had no national rulers since January 1991, are hunkered down at the U.N.-controlled airport and sea port with 8,000 soldiers.

The only U.N. expatriate staff still in the city are 15 World Food Programme (WFP) staff who have been blocked in their house by Somali gunmen demanding money.

A WFP ship carrying 1,800 tonnes of food that docked at Mogadishu has sailed away again because one agency official said: "Our operations are at a standstill."

U.N. sources said that all civilians would evacuate by Feb. 14.

They said a U.S. military-led task force of six nations in a flotilla of 18 ships was likely to begin helping the extraction of Egyptian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi troops almost immediately afterwards.

All U.N. troops are expected to be out by Feb. 24 as U.S. Marines form a rear-guard on land, U.N. sources added. There has been no official confirmation of this.

U.S. military officers have said equipment, such as military hardware, which is not removed will be destroyed by departing forces so that the militias cannot plunder it.

An outbreak of fighting between the rival clan militias of Mohammed Farah Aided, the man who battled U.S.-led forces in Mogadishu in 1993, and Ali Madhi Mohammed for control of the port and airport could erupt after the U.N.'s departure.

Tensions are being stocked further because Mr. Ali Madhi's faction has announced it will hold a reconciliation conference in Mogadishu from next Monday. General Aided is not invited.

Mr. Ali Madhi has warned as well that any announcement of the formation of a unilateral government by Gen. Aided and his allies — predicted this week by the chairman of a south Mogadishu "peace conference" — will reignite the civil war which has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Somalis.

The constantly changing alliances among Somalia's myriad clans and sub-clans is meanwhile complicated by the adoption of Islamic Sharia law in north Mogadishu and in an enclave in the south of the city controlled by Mr. Ali Madhi's followers.

The Islamic law has been rejected elsewhere except for a small enclave in the south-west of the country.

In the north, a former British colony which joined with a former Italian colony in 1960 to form independent Somalia, has declared secession as "the Republic of Somaliland." But its independence remains unrecognised by any nation.

Hizbollah television on the air

TWO FEMALE journalists present a news bulletin at the fundamentalist Hizbollah party's television "Al Manar" (The Light-house) in Beirut's southern suburb. The Hizbollah television network was founded in 1990 and employs 125 persons, broadcasting eight hours per day (AFP photo)



Turkey says U.S. rights report biased, baseless

ANKARA (Agency) — A U.S. report saying the human rights situation in Turkey has worsened is biased and based on mere allegations, Turkey's foreign ministry has said.

The U.S. State Department reported on Wednesday that the human rights situation in Turkey "worsened significantly" last year as the armed forces stepped up a 10-year war on the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

"The claims in the report... are based mainly on information obtained from local non-governmental organisations," foreign ministry spokesman Ferhat Ataman said in a statement.

"The use of these assertions, most of which go no further than mere claims, without verification" showed that the U.S. State Department has made the "error of communicating one-sided information," he said.

In its annual report on human rights around the world, the State Department accused the government of Prime Minister Tansu Ciller of failing to carry out promises of improvement.

"Torture and excessive use of force by security personnel persisted throughout 1994," it said.

Mr. Ataman said the Turkish government had made important reforms concerning human rights and intended to continue making improvements.

The West has been increasingly criticising Turkey for its hardline approach to Kurdish opposition.

Washington has become openly critical of Ankara over human rights despite Turkey's position as a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) ally and, the facilities it supplies for enforcing the western "no-fly zone" over northern Iraq.

In December, a deal for Turkey's customs union with the European Union was put off until March, pending improvements. The postponement, after a Greek veto, was made amid displeasure over Turkey's human rights record and the recent jailing of eight Kurdish parliamentarians for up to 15 years.

Islamic Movement to take part in Israeli polls

TEL AVIV (R) — The Islamic Movement in Israel, a group of Muslim fundamentalists which works within Israel's political system, said on Saturday it would mobilise its supporters during the next Israeli elections.

Its head, Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish, said the movement's leadership unanimously approved a decision this week to reverse a previous boycott of general elections. The movement operates among the 900,000 Arabs who hold Israeli citizenship.

"It is possible to say that the decision was to participate in the elections," he told Israel Radio in Hebrew.

Islamic Movement leaders have developed close contacts with militant groups like Hamas while stressing that they do not in any way break Israeli law themselves. They have condemned recent Palestinian militant attacks on Israelis.

They recently served as mediators between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Muslim militant groups opposed to the 1993 Israel-PLO peace deal.

Mr. Darwish said a decision had not yet been taken on whether to set up an independent list to run for Israeli parliamentary elections scheduled for 1996, or to advise supporters to vote for existing parties.

"We are going to hold a referendum in the Islamic Movement and the Arab population in the state of Israel and afterwards we'll have another conference and will act on the decision of the majority," he said.

The Islamic Movement's decision to take part in Israeli elections is expected to boost existing Arab parties which back Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's ruling coalition. Recent polls have indicated dwindling support among Israelis for Mr. Rabin.

Israeli Arab sources say the Islamic Movement represents about 20 per cent of Arabs who live in Israel.

Muslim fundamentalists control the municipality of Umm Al Fahm, a town of 40,000 people, and other local councils in Arab Israeli areas.

Rights group accuses Egypt of hostage-taking to battle militants

CAIRO (AP) — Blindfolded with her hands tied behind her back, a 70-year-old woman stood before her sons, her clothes ripped off. Police threatened to rape her if another brother, an Islamic militant, did not turn himself in, a human rights group says.

The brother surrendered, and his family was released.

The account, detailed in a report Tuesday by Human Rights Watch-Middle East, cites more than a dozen cases of people taken hostage in Cairo and southern Egypt to pressure their relatives, usually known or suspected militants, to surrender.

It accuses the government of torturing and killing suspected militants taken into custody during its three-year-old battle with extremists seeking to install Islamic rule.

"The arbitrary and punitive detention of family members... indicates that the practice has become systematic and therefore undoubtedly is sanctioned, if not ordered, at a high level within Egypt's security apparatus," the report concluded.

Egypt's government denies it takes hostages or harasses families. Its interior minister, Hassan Al-Ali, pledged to end the practice when he took office in 1993. President Hosni Mubarak said this month there are no political prisoners in Egyptian jails.

"This is a country where the legislation is very clear and we condemn any systematic violation of human rights," Naela Gabr, director of the Foreign Ministry's Human Rights Department, said Monday. "We as a country and government respect all norms of human rights despite cases of terrorism."

She declined to elaborate, saying she had not seen the report.

Evidence for the Human Rights Watch report was gathered in interviews over four years by the international group and the Egyptian Organisation of Human Rights. The report offered no specific figures, but suggested that dozens of families have had members detained, particularly in southern Egypt.

The allegations come amid escalating strife in Egypt's long-neglected south, where Islamic militants are fighting a war of attrition against a government they consider corrupt and secular.

Eighty-three people were killed in battles between Islamic militants and police in January, the highest toll for one month since the fighting intensified in 1992. Opposition writers and human rights activists say the struggle has come to resemble a vendetta between police and the militants.

The arrests and family harassment have not been confined to the south.

The report highlights the case of Abdul-Harith Madani, a lawyer who represented Muslim militants. He died in custody in April after suffering what the government called an asthma attack. The report says three family members were detained in Cairo to force him to quickly bury his body, which was received in a sealed coffin.

The practice of hostage-taking dates back to 1990 and increased in 1992, the report said. It has been reported across the country, both in cities and the countryside. Detention has lasted from a few hours to weeks, torture is common and women have been stripped, all as part of a campaign to instill fear among villagers, it said.

"They take women, they take children, they take the old, even people whose families have not been accused," Abdul-Halim Mandour, an Islamic lawyer in Cairo, told the Associated Press.

After a big security operation in a Cairo neighbourhood that included hostage-taking, the report said students developed the slogan: "The hell of the Muslim groups is better than the police's heaven."

The report also described two cases in which security forces allegedly pulled suspected militants from prison and executed them. Killings that have been rumoured for months in the south.

In the first case, three men in custody were brought to the scene of an earlier clash and killed, the report said, quoting local lawyers and sources. Police said they died in a Feb. 27 gunbattle.

About three weeks later, three suspects were taken from custody and killed in a cemetery, lawyers told Human Rights Watch. The killings occurred hours after five policemen were slain in an ambush by the Al Gamaa Al Islamiyah, they said.

Request to France

The Turkish government Friday asked France to recapture and rearrest the leader of the radical group Dev Sol, who is suspected of taking part in several murders.

Turkey had expressed "disappointment" over the weekend that Dursun Karatas, 41, was released from prison by French authorities last week on condition he remain in France and report regularly to police.

Mr. Karatas failed to check in with French police Thursday night, an official of the Turkish embassy in Paris said.

"We have contacted all the ministries concerned to express our dissatisfaction with the probable escape from the country of this criminal, and to ask for his arrest," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"He was freed under 'judicial control', as his attorneys requested," the official said. "But last night, he violated the conditions of his freedom."

Mr. Karatas had been jailed since last September when he was arrested entering France on a forged Dutch passport.

A man and a woman, also Dev Sol members, were arrested with Mr. Karatas, who was carrying a firearm, according to a diplomatic source in Paris.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N. Cyprus envoy to visit region in March

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The U.N. special representative for Cyprus, former Canadian Prime Minister Joe Clark, is expected to visit Cyprus, Greece and Turkey in early March, diplomats said. He had been due to leave for the region last weekend but the trip was postponed. Mr. Clark and the U.N. under-secretary-general for political affairs, Marrack Goulding, Friday discussed long-stalled efforts to resolve the Cyprus question with representatives of the United States and Britain. Taking part were Richard Beattie, a recently appointed U.S. presidential envoy for Cyprus, and British Deputy U.N. Representative Stephen Gomersall. The meeting was mainly to compare notes and ensure coordination, the sources said.

Russian mafia 'boss' wants to buy kibbutz

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A suspected Russian mafia boss Friday wanted to buy a kibbutz or communal settlement in Israel, in an interview with Israeli television. Yanki Yushbassov said: "I am planning property investment. I would very much like to buy a kibbutz to turn it into a collective farm." Mr. Yushbassov often stays in a Tel Aviv hotel. Agriculture Minister Yaakov Tzur immediately ruled out Mr. Yushbassov's chances, stressing that kibbutzim, built on state land, are not for sale. Mr. Yushbassov also said he was simply a "businessman," wrongly accused by the Russian press of being a mafia boss. "I do not understand why I am nicknamed Don Corleone," he said. Six Israelis, suspected of involvement in the burglary of Russia's national library in St. Petersburg, were arrested Wednesday in Tel Aviv by Israeli police. They are suspected of having helped a branch of the Russian mafia to steal 90 rare manuscripts worth \$300 million in the break-in two months ago.

Afghan cleric, 7 others killed

ISLAMABAD (R) — A leading member of an Afghan Shiite Muslim faction, Ali Akbar Mesbahi Mazari, has been killed in an ambush in northern Afghanistan along with seven companions, government-controlled Kabul Radio said. It said Mazari, a member of the central committee of a pro-government faction of Hezb-e-Wahdat, had been killed on Tuesday near the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif. The radio blamed the Shiite cleric's killing on a faction of Hezb-e-Wahdat opposed to the Kabul government led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani. The Red Cross estimated that more than 25,000 people have been killed in Afghan factional fighting since guerrillas took power from a collapsed former communist government in April 1992 after 14 years of civil war.

Iranian killer of Japanese gets 10 years

SUNDSVALL, Sweden (AFP) — An Iranian national was sentenced Friday to 10 years in prison after admitting he had murdered a Japanese model in Japan in April 1992. Judicial officials announced here Friday. The Iranian, a 28-year-old refugee whose name was not revealed, had admitted killing the model, a 40-year-old woman, at Har Juku, a suburb of Tokyo, "because she had threatened to denounce him to the Japanese police and mafia." State prosecutors, announcing last month that the Iranian was to be tried, said police had needed a year of interrogations to persuade him to admit his crime. After killing the woman with an Arab dagger, the man had made off with money equivalent to around \$10,000. He was arrested at a refugee camp near here in October 1993 after arriving in Sweden under an assumed name. He told investigators he had killed the woman "in a state of panic," smashing a bottle over her head and then stabbing her several times in the chest. The Iranian was tried in Sweden since under Swedish law he could not be extradited to face a capital charge in a country which maintains the death penalty. The court at Sundsvall, 400 kilometres north of the capital Stockholm, applied the maximum sentence permissible under Swedish law.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 77311-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:00	Cocottes Minutes
17:30	Que Le Maelleur Gagne
18:00	Pepe
19:00	News in French
19:15	Ushuaia
19:30	Profiles of the Muslim World
19:50	Charlie Chaplin
20:00	Erebus "Aftermath"
21:00	Step by Step
21:30	Heartbeat
22:00	News in English
22:30	Feature film: "Night Crossing"
23:00	Tell Me What Again
PRAYER TIMES	
05:04	Fajr
06:23	Sunrise
11:49	Dhuhr
14:59	Asr
17:16	Maghrib
18:35	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church, Swedisch, Tel. 810740	
Assamites of God Church, Tel. 632785	
St. Joseph Church, Tel. 634590	
Church of the Annunciation, Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terrence Church Tel. 622366	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 773261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Armenian International Church Tel. 625236	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195	
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Temperatures are expected to drop with rainfall expected in all parts of the Kingdom. Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy with winds northwesterly moderate. In Agaba, winds will be northerly moderate to active and seas calm.	
Min./Max. temp.	
Amman	7/10
Agaba	10/20
Deserts	4/12

JORDAN VALLEY	
7:15	
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Agaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 95 per cent, Agaba 64 per cent.	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Mukhlis Halasa	819220
Dr. Shalabeh Al Lazz	737774
Dr. Shatawi Abu Zayed	737962
Dr. Khalil Al Tushuq	615715
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asana pharmacy	637055
Nairosh pharmacy	626672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	649495
Shmeisan pharmacy	637660
Nairosh pharmacy	626672
Najib pharmacy	847632
IRBID:	
Dr. Ahmad Qanu	(-)
Akqaba pharmacy	(-)
ZARQA:	
Dr. Wasil Halaseh	982799
Khalifah pharmacy	983417

EMERGENCIES	
Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate	Rescue
Civil Defence Emergency	630341
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	986390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Water and Sewerage	661176
Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality	787111
Telephone Information	121
Directorate assistance	010230
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone	Repairs
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	771111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power	636381
Conspiracy	08-52300
RJ Flight Information	08-52300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-52300

HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	Husseini Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn	
Akheh Maternity, J. Amn	642816
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Mallat, J. Amman	636140
Palestine Shmeisan	664171/4
Shmeisan Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muhsin Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	661646
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	777101/3
Army, Marika	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
ZARQA:	Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)900560
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)986732
IRBID:	Princess Beama Hospital (03)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital	(03)27275
AQABA:	Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER	
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)332005, where it should always be verified.	
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
05:35	Bangkok (RJ)
07:45	Agaba (RJ)
08:35	Jeddah (RJ)
09:00	Damascus (RJ)
09:05	Larnaca (RJ)
09:15	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:15	Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
17:00	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:20	Brussels, Paris (RJ)
17:55	Madrid, Genova (RJ)
18:40	Athens (RJ)
19:35	Vienna (RJ)
20:00	Rome (RJ)
20:05	Frankfurt (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
12:35	Manama (GF)
14:25	Moscow (RU)
20:05	Cairo (MS)
20:20	Beirut (ME)
22:55	Istanbul (TK)
01:10	Amsterdam (KL)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
05:30	Agaba (RJ)
06:25	Beirut (RJ)
09:05	Frankfurt (RJ)
10:05	Vienna (RJ)
11:05	Rome (RJ)
11:15	Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30	Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:50	Athens (RJ)
20:00	Jeddah (RJ)
20:30	Dhahran (RJ)
20:45	Larnaca (RJ)
20:45	Agaba, Cairo (RJ)
21:25	Damascus (RJ)
21:25	Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:30	New Delhi (RJ)
22:00	Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:30	Bangkok (RJ)
22:45	Sanaa (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
07:25	Doha, Muscat (GF)
16:05	Moscow (RU)
21:00	Cairo (MS)
HIJAZ RAILWAY	
TRAIN	
Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday	
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday	
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday	
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday	
MARKET PRICES	
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.	
Apple	700/400
Banana (Mekammar)	600
Cabbage	150/80
Carrot	220/120
Cauliflower	150/80
Cucumbers (large)	200/100
Cucumbers (small)	150/80
Eggplant	300/200
Garlic	800/500
Grape Fruit	300/200
Lemon	300/200
Marrow (large)	150/80
Marrow (small)	150/80
Onion (green)	300/200
Onion (dry)	320/200
Orange	300/200
Pepper (hot)	400/200
Pepper (sweet)	300/200
Potato	300/200
Radish	150/80
Spinach	300/200
String Beans	200/100
Tomato	400/200

Brown to tour Jordan, area for economic talks

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — U.S. Commerce Secretary of State Ronald Brown is expected to visit Jordan this week heading an American trade delegation including 10 chief executives of U.S. companies as part of a tour of the Middle East.

Mr. Brown will also attend a Feb. 7-8 meeting in Taba, Egypt, of senior officials and businessmen from Jordan, Egypt, the Palestinian autonomous territories and Israel.

According to a news release from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the meeting "underscores the commitment of the government and the private sector to the peace process."

"Our goals of economic cooperation and trade development are integral to that process," Mr. Brown was quoted as saying. "To build lasting peace and stability, we must ensure the region has a strong economic foundation."

Mr. Brown visited Jordan in late 1993 and said the Department of Commerce was seriously engaged in efforts to encourage the American private sector to do business with and in the Kingdom in trade as well as joint ventures.

The commerce secretary particularly emphasised the need for Jordan to revamp its customs duty structure

on automobiles to increase Jordanian imports of American-made vehicles and also to tighten its copy right laws and legislation related to intelligence property rights.

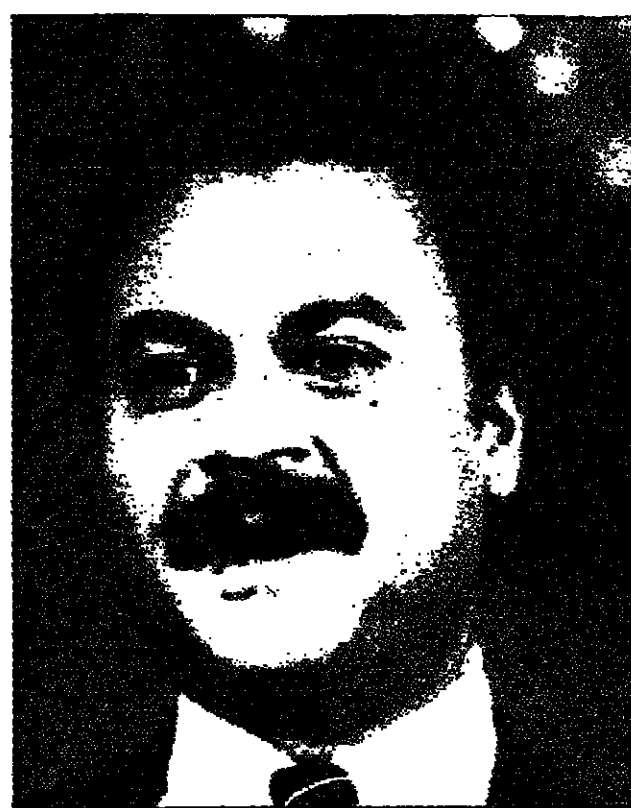
These measures, he said, were inevitable if Jordan wanted to attract American business. Jordan has partly met with the suggested revamping of customs duties by reducing customs tariffs on automobiles, but not to the extent that the Department of Commerce would have liked.

The U.S. is the largest single exporter to Jordan, accounting for about \$300 million of the Kingdom's imports during 1994 and less than \$10 million in exports.

According to the Department of Commerce, Mr. Brown "will meet for the first time next week with trade leaders from Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority to discuss removing trade barriers and enhancing the role of the private sector in the Middle East" during the Taba meeting.

Minister of Trade and Industry Ali Abul Ragheb and a team of officials, as well as representatives of the private sector, are expected to represent Jordan at the meeting, the first of its kind to be held in the region.

While in the area, Mr. Brown will also chair the third meeting of the U.S.-



Ronald Brown

Israeli Science and Technology Commission, which "encourages joint projects between high-technology industries in the U.S. and Israel and promotes commercially oriented scientific exchanges between the universities and research institutes of the two countries."

Mr. Brown and the delegation accompanying him will visit Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip,

Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) "to discuss ways to increase economic viability and create jobs in the U.S. and throughout the region," the Commerce Department said.

Secretary Brown serves on the U.S. president's National Economic Council, the Domestic Policy Council and the Task Force

on National Health Care Reform. He also is chairman of the Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee, and of the National Information Infrastructure Task Force, President Clinton's initiative to build a national information super-highway. Secretary Brown is co-chair of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade, the U.S.-Russia Business Development Committee, and the U.S.-Israel Science and Technology Commission.

Formerly a partner in the Washington, D.C., law firm of Patton, Boggs, and Blow, Secretary Brown is a member of the New York Bar, the District of Columbia Bar and the United States Supreme Court Bar. He also served as chief counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee under the Chairmanship of Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

Secretary Brown spent 12 years with the National Urban League as Deputy Executive Director, General Counsel and vice president of its Washington operations.

Secretary Brown currently serves on the Board of Trustees for Middlebury College and is chair of the Senior Advisory Committee of the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He is also an elected member of the Council on Foreign Relations.



Her Royal Highness Princess Basma campaign in Balqa governorate (Petra Saturday launches Ramadan charity photo)

Princess Basma launches Ramadan charity campaign

SALT (J.T.) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Saturday launched a Ramadan charity campaign in the Balqa Governorate by donating a dialysis unit to the Salt government hospital and distributing food and clothing to 500 needy families in the towns of Subeihi and Buweida and the nearby villages.

The Princess first stopped at the hospital in Salt where she met its director, Usama Samawi, and the staff to whom she presented the dialysis unit which will benefit 13 kidney patients who used to travel to Amman to obtain medical service at Al Bashir Hospital, the Jordan University Hospital and the King Hussein Medical Center.

According to Dr. Samawi, other patients among the 80,000 inhabitants of the Balqa Governorate could now come to the hospital to get a similar service instead of going to Amman.

The Princess toured different parts of the hospital, including the paediatric ward, and enquired about the patients' conditions and the services offered to them.

Following the visit, the Princess visited the Subeihi and Buweida towns and supervised the distribution of in-kind gifts to the needy population.

In a brief address, the Princess said that the charity campaign was aimed at raising funds and distributing the contributions to the poor families to enhance social solidarity, especially in the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Mohammad Al Taleb, head of a local council, welcomed the Princess and paid tribute to her endeavours towards helping the poor of Jordan and improving the living conditions of people in the rural regions.

Teams of young volunteers from the local communities were involved in the distribution of the in-kind donations to the poor families.

The Ramadan charity campaign, which is spearheaded by the Queen Alia Fund for social development (QAF), is the fifth this year following four successful consecutive years.

A QAF spokesman said a total of 10,000 boy scouts and

girl guides are involved in the campaign throughout the Kingdom. They will be wearing uniforms and will have cash collection boxes with proper identification labels, according to the spokesman who noted that the campaign in the Amman area will take place on Feb. 6.

The charity campaign aims at collecting cash and in-kind contributions for helping the needy, those who are in poor health and need medicines or covering the cost of required surgeries, according to the spokesman.

The previous four Ramadan charity campaigns were successful and the contributions benefited 15,000 needy families in 1994, the spokesman said, adding that donors can call at any of QAF's 45 centres in Jordan and bring in cash or in-kind contributions or they can call QAF officials who would collect the donations throughout the campaign in Ramadan.

Last year QAF presented a dialysis unit to the Maan Hospital, to be used in the treatment of kidney patients.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince Hassan receives archaeologists

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan received in his office a delegation of British archaeologists led by David Wilson, former director of the British Museum. They reviewed the activities of the British Institute for Archaeology and history in Amman. Prince Hassan expressed satisfaction with the institute's performance and his hope that the institute would expand its activities and cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and other concerned departments. Dr. Ghazi Bisheh, director general of the Department of Antiquities, was present at the meeting.

Batayneh visits hospital units

MADABA (Petra) — Health Minister Aref Batayneh Saturday visited Madaba and inspected the dialysis unit and the X-ray and emergency sections at the Nadim Hospital which was recently bought by the government from a private institution. The minister later inspected work on a JD120,000 health centre for the town of Lib, near Madaba, and announced that the health centre will be equipped with a dentist clinic and a laboratory.

House to answer deputy queries

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament is holding a session Sunday morning when its members are expected to hear replies by Cabinet members to queries raised by deputies and to refer to its concerned committees a number of proposals. Several deputies had suggested the construction of two tunnels or bridges on the Amman-Zarqa highway, one at Prince Hashem Housing Estate and the other near the Ruseifa slaughter house. The House members will examine draft amendments to laws and review reports by the House's Administrative Committee.

11 local councils granted loans

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cities and Villages Development Bank last month granted local councils loans totalling JD462,000. The 11 local councils benefiting from the loans will use them to finance road construction and the construction of municipal buildings.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

PLAY

★ Play (in Arabic) entitled "Ye Who Are Hearing" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.

CONCERT

★ Concert by Idda' band at the Royal Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.

FILM

★ Film entitled "Malcolm X" at the American Center at 2:30 p.m.

SEMINAR

★ Seminar (in Arabic) entitled "The Future of Islamic Movements" by Mr. Amin Nayif Dhiab at the Royal Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

★ Exhibition of works by Qasim Al Samir at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery.

★ Book exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre. Also showing another exhibition of Arabic Calligraphy.

★ Exhibition of abstract art by Mohammad Labadi at Alfa Art Gallery.

★ Exhibition of the works of Lebanese artist Amin Al Basma at Darat Al Funn. Also showing another exhibition entitled "Phase II-Doors and Windows" by Jordanian artist Ghada Dahdaleh and works by contemporary Arab artists.

★ Educational works depicting the life of "Voltaire" at the French Cultural Centre.

★ Exhibition of works by Hala Mahayni at the Petra International Hotel in Aqaba.

Abequa trial to start soon

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Prosecutors are near to completing work on the case against Mohammad Abequa, a naturalised American citizen of Jordanian origin who is accused of killing his American wife in New Jersey and kidnapping their two children, and a date could soon be set for trial, officials said Saturday.

They said a prosecutor was expected to visit New Jersey soon to interview witnesses in the case and seek to have some of them travel to Jordan and testify in the trial as prosecution witnesses.

The Associated Press quoted Justice Minister Hisham Al Tal as saying that prosecutor Khalil Darwish, who is expected to travel to New Jersey soon after the judicial authorities approve the trip, "will try to convince the most productive witnesses to travel to Jordan and testify in court."

A court could set the date for the trial as soon as it

becomes clear that the witnesses sought by the prosecution would testify in Jordan.

Mr. Darwish took over from Prosecutor Fuad Daradsh, who has been handling the case until now.

Most of the material evidence in the case has already been forwarded to Jordan by American law enforcement authorities. Mr. Abequa, 46, remains in detention in the Swaga prison. He was arrested on July 20, two weeks after he allegedly killed his wife, Nihal, 40, in a dispute over the custody of their two children, Lisa, 6, and Sami, three.

After the July 4 killing, Mr. Abequa fled to Jordan with the children in violation of an American court ruling, and hence the kidnapping charge.

According to reports, Mr. Abequa, while interrogated by prosecutors and interviewed by the press, had confessed to the killing and fleeing with the children to Jordan.

Jordan, which does not have an extradition treaty with the U.S., has turned down an American request to extradite Mr. Abequa for trial.

The two children were returned to the family of their mother in early August.

The Abequa case prompted the governments of Jordan and the United States to prepare an extradition treaty. The document is expected to be formalised this year.

In another case, a Saudi Arabian national sentenced to death in a case involving bomb explosions at cinema houses, plots to assassinate Jordanian and Palestinian peace negotiators with Israel and destabilise Jordan remains in a U.S. jail.

The convict was reported to have sought to surrender himself to Jordan for an automatic retrial, but he has not yet been cleared of charges of violating American immigration laws for him to be released and sent to the Kingdom, according to sources.

Workshop tackles protection of biological diversity

AMMAN — The International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) in cooperation with the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) and the Arab Centre for the Studies of the Arid Zones (ACSAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are organising here a 5-day workshop on "Dryland Biodiversity through Resource Management."

The workshop, inaugurated today (Sunday) by Mansour Ibn Tarif, minister of agriculture, is the second workshop which addresses this issue and responds to the recommendations of the Earth Summit on United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED's) Agenda 21.

The first workshop was held in Amman in June 1994. Sunday's workshop will address the need for concerted international action and regional cooperation to protect biological diversity, as recognised by the conventions on Biological Diversity, Deserti-

fication and Agenda 21. The workshop will address: — The need to overcome the serious erosion of drylands biodiversity.

— The need to promote *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and sustainable use of drylands biodiversity/genetic resources.

— The need to provide governments with the broadest possible diversity of drylands germplasm essential to sustainable agricultural development of arid zones.

— The need to enhance govt. biodiversity productivity through integrated management of natural resources.

— The need to assist governments and local peoples in incorporating biodiversity conservation and sustainable use issues in drylands natural resources management.

— The need to encourage the generation and use of knowledge on the productivity of marginal drylands.

— The need for human resources development for the implementation of integrated programmes for management of drylands natural resources.

Increased number of drylands species surveyed, germplasm collected and deposited in national gene banks and in the gene banks network housing the world base collections.

Increased number of national/regional programme for ecogeographical surveying, collection and conservation of drylands genetic resources and their use in drylands development.

The workshop will be held over five days at the Marriott Hotel, and includes a visit to the Azraq Oasis Conservation Project and the Al Shoman Wild Life Reserve.

Over 50 participants from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Turkey are expected, together with scientists from U.S. and Europe. The overall aim of the workshop is to address the problems of specific ecosystems in the region, find solutions and then match future training needs to this.

The findings will also be used to finalise the biodiversity project which is being considered by UNDP/GEF (Global Environment Facilities) for funding.

Rain forecast through Wednesday

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Department of Meteorology Saturday forecast further scattered rain in various parts of Jordan for Sunday and a low depression to affect Jordan and the eastern Mediterranean areas for Monday.

A department spokesman told the Jordan Times that

rain fell across the country Saturday as a result of a low depression centred over the Kingdom.

Torrential rain fell on Aqaba Saturday, causing street flooding, according to Tamer Al Fayez, the Aqaba governor who said that Civil Defence and municipal teams worked hard to reopen roads

and manholes blocked by sand.

According to Meteorology Department spokesman Haniham Al Shaer, the low depression centred over Cyprus and which will affect Jordan Monday will bring in more rain, accompanied by thunder, which will continue to fall through Wednesday.

4-year-old dies electrocuted

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A 4-year-old Ajloun boy died Friday electrocuted, according to Public Security Department (PSD) reports.

Amr Idrisi was on the roof of his house, he started playing with electric wires and was electrocuted, the boy's father told police.

Mr. Idrisi said he heard his son screaming; when he went to check, he saw his son lying on the floor of the roof.

The child was rushed to Abu Obeidah government hospital but had died of heart failure. Police said they are investigating the incident.

In a separate incident, a

35-year-old man was killed Friday in Irbid after a marble block fell on him, PSD reports said.

According to the report, Hassan H. was working in a stone cutting shop in Irbid, when the marble block fell on his chest.

The victim was rushed to Princess Basma Hospital, but died shortly after arriving there.

Police said that the body was transferred to Al Bashir Hospital for an autopsy. The authorities are investigating the incident.

This is the fourth work-related death to be reported in the Kingdom in the past four weeks.

Last year, 23 people were

killed and more than 13,000 people were injured in work-related accidents.

In the meantime, the Civil Defence Department (CDD) responded to 500 emergencies over the past seven days, which resulted in the death of seven people. The report said that of the 500 emergencies, 459 were rescue operations and 31 were fires.

According to CDD public relations Director Captain Farid Share', most of the fires were the result of short circuits in electric wires.

Capt. Share' called on people not to overload the electric outlets and do the necessary maintenance to the electric wires and plugs to avoid such accidents.

Jospin wins Socialist nomination

PARIS (R) — Former Socialist chief Lionel Jospin was headed for victory Saturday in the contest to choose the Socialist to take on conservative front-runner Prime Minister Edouard Balladur in France's presidential elections.

Party officials said vote tallies in the largest Socialist federations showed Mr. Jospin with about a three-to-two lead over current party head Henri Emmanuelli, who conceded it appeared he had lost.

"I think it will be Lionel Jospin (and) I will not be a bad loser," Mr. Emmanuelli told reporters.

"There will be no fratricidal war, as some have predicted over the past two weeks," he said.

Initial tallies across France flagged Mr. Jospin as the

eventual winner, a party official told Reuters.

"The trend is clearly toward Jospin," said the official.

With their candidate now in place, the Socialists face a formidable uphill battle.

Opinion polls have shown any Socialist candidate lagging well behind Mr. Balladur for the April 23 first round of voting.

If the election were held now, according to the surveys, neither Mr. Jospin nor Mr. Emmanuelli would make the May 7 run-off round of the contest to succeed Socialist Francois Mitterrand, 78, who is stepping down after two seven-year terms as head of state.

Mr. Jospin, addressing supporters in the southwestern city of Toulouse Saturday, stopped short of claim-

ing victory but pledged if he won the nomination to leave behind him the divisive battles that have plagued his party in the race.

"We must go forward from this time on," he said.

"Confronting us is the Balladur mystery — or rather the Balladur mystique. His score in the opinion polls reflects voters' resignation rather than their desire," Mr. Jospin said.

Officials said turnout was high, with about three-quarters of the party's 103,000 members voting in the nomination contest.

Mr. Jospin, 57, is known as an earnest moderate with little charisma and a chequered electoral record.

The chain-smoking Emmanuelli, 49, is a blunt-speaking militant who faces trial just

weeks before the first round of presidential voting in a party funding scandal.

Hampered by internal bickering and their late start in the presidential campaign, the Socialists' situation is a far cry from six weeks ago when they confidently expected the then-outgoing European Commission President Jacques Delors to carry their colours.

Then Mr. Delors, who had been leading Mr. Balladur in opinion polls, announced on Dec. 11 he would not run, saying that with Mr. Balladur's centre-right government in power, there would not be a majority in parliament to back his policies.

The Socialists' only hope now lies with polls that show voters in a volatile mood with as many as six in 10 still uncertain how to vote.

Polish premier fights for survival

WARSAW (R) — Polish Prime Minister Waldemar Pawlak fought for political survival Saturday against relentless attacks by President Lech Walesa and signs that his own left-wing coalition partners wanted to dump him.

The head of the senior coalition partner, ex-communist Aleksander Kwasniewski, said he would be ready to take over from Mr. Pawlak if a viable administration could be formed.

"If there was a situation in which I could act in an effective government, then of course I would not refuse," the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) chief told Polish News Agency (PAP).

Mr. Pawlak himself earlier vowed to stand firm and his smaller Polish Peasant Party (PSL) rallied behind him. "We will not succumb to this atmosphere of anxiety and scandal," he said.

Mr. Walesa is so determined to get rid of Mr. Pawlak that he began formal moves this week to dissolve parliament, on controversial legal grounds, arousing fears of a constitutional crisis.

His actions evoked protests across the political spectrum. Parliament meeting in an extended session passed a motion saying it would be illegal for Mr. Walesa to dissolve the body and that the row with him posed a threat to the nation.

In a clear signal that Mr. Walesa is deeply isolated politically, 376 deputies voted for the motion, with only 16 against and 16 abstentions.

"The possible dissolution of parliament by the president of the republic, as an act which has no legal grounds, would be regarded by the Sejm (lower house) as illegal and the president... would be held constitutionally responsible," the motion said.

Mr. Walesa says that dismissing parliament and prompting new parliamentary elections may be the only way he can unseat the current coalition, made up of parties with roots in the pre-1989 era of communist rule.

He has accused Mr. Pawlak of stalling market reforms, heading a cabinet in which ministers stand accused of corruption or other abuses and of trying to dilute the powers of the presidency.

Mr. Walesa has said that Mr. Kwasniewski would at least be a more effective leader and has urged him to take over.

In what they termed a "stormy" meeting late Friday, SLD chiefs questioned Mr. Pawlak's leadership of the coalition and suggested both parties vote on whether it should continue.

The president's quarrel with Mr. Pawlak has partly been over appointments to the ministers of defence and foreign affairs, on which Mr. Walesa claims the deciding say under the constitution.

Mr. Walesa and Mr. Pawlak have for weeks failed to agree on any compromise candidate for the two vacant ministries.

However, suspicions among the SLD that Mr. Pawlak may have tried this week to do a deal with Mr. Walesa over the posts behind their backs infuriated leaders of the larger coalition party.

The SLD and PSL together have a majority in parliament, giving them an incentive to keep the coalition. Mr. Kwasniewski, who has so far not taken a cabinet post, told reporters the alliance would survive even if there was a cabinet reshuffle.

Ukraine, Belarus sceptical on rapid CIS integration

DONETSK, Ukraine (R) — Ukraine and Belarus have expressed scepticism about rapid economic integration with other former Soviet republics before a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit devoted to the issue.

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, speaking Friday in the eastern industrial city of Donetsk, said each former Soviet republic had first to deal with its own economy before tackling a process that had taken decades in Western Europe.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko spoke favourably of boosting ties with Russia, but his top aide rejected any extension of a bilateral customs union to other CIS states.

The CIS summit, the first since October, is scheduled for next Friday in Alma-Ata, capital of Kazakhstan. Its agenda is expected to be dominated by proposals to speed integration of members' economies, particularly through a customs union.

"The spotlight at Alma-Ata will be on economic matters. We must find the

mechanism to make the CIS work so that the interests of all the states coincide," Mr. Kuchma said after a tour of mines and factories in the Donbass Coalfield.

"But I am convinced that in future the main thing will be improving bilateral relations. Europe took decades to achieve unity. We have today different economic systems. What sort of integration can we speak of?"

In Belarus, Mr. Lukashenko told the chairman of Russia's lower house of parliament Friday he was considering holding referendums on closer ties with Moscow.

"I am sure the Belarusian people will strongly favour fraternal contact and integration, a closer relationship between two great peoples," he said.

But his chief of staff, Leonid Sinitsin, said integration had its limits. He denied Belarus had agreed to extend a customs union signed with Russia last month to Kazakhstan and discounted opening membership to other CIS states.

Bonn seeks closer ties between Europe, America

MUNICH, Germany (R) — Germany, echoing France, called Saturday for creation of a "new trans-Atlantic agenda" that would transcend the NATO alliance and bind Europe and North America in a tight partnership to ensure world stability.

"In the future Europe and America should coordinate their foreign and security policy more comprehensively than is allowed by the existing security cooperation focused on Europe within the framework of NATO," Defence Minister Volker Ruehe said.

"Europe and America need a new trans-Atlantic agenda encompassing the spectrum of political, economic and military issues," he told the annual Wehrkunde Security Conference.

"This is a matter of agreeing common political objectives and strategies for handling basic questions in a complex world and in a new age," the German minister added, saying NATO no longer sufficed as the single institutional basis for relations.

British Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind agreed.

"With the end of the cold war, NATO and defence issues remain too narrow a shoulder on which to base the whole Atlantic relationship," he told the Munich conference.

The sentiment echoed comments by French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe Monday proposing a "new trans-Atlantic charter" that would enshrine the joint will of the two continents to safeguard stability.

This sent a strong signal that France was prepared to play a fuller, more positive role in a renovated NATO in the future. Paris pulled out of NATO's U.S.-dominated military command in 1966, but has since inched closer to the alliance.

Mr. Juppe was set to address the Wehrkunde conference later Saturday. U.S. Defence Minister William Perry and NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes are also attending.

Mr. Ruehe said Europe and the United States must stick together even after winning the cold war and defeating communism, warning his audience of politicians and defence experts against "solo efforts on this side or that side of the Atlantic."

"The old 'trans-Atlantic

bargain' — trading protection for influence — must be further developed into a new, expanded 'trans-Atlantic contract'."

"Now we have to give the trans-Atlantic partnership vision and strategic substance for tomorrow," he said.

Mr. Ruehe said Germany was prepared to step up its contribution to upholding global security by sending its troops abroad.

But he made it clear that Bonn would only consider sending its forces on United Nations-backed missions in Europe or its periphery where German soldiers would be welcomed by all the parties to a conflict.

Any missions beyond defending Germany or its NATO allies must be driven by compelling reasons that ensure public support and must be backed by a clear political concept and precise military objective, he said.

Mr. Ruehe's comments reflect the Kohl administration's efforts to boost united, democratic Germany's military role now that the country has spent 50 years living down its Nazi past.

But it has moved cautiously because public opinion remains deeply ambivalent about sending German soldiers out to fight outside North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) territory.

At the same time, many Europeans have been pushing to take on more responsibility for their own defence and security policies. The United States has encouraged the trend, unwilling to foot a huge bill to help protect its allies.

Nevertheless, German politicians are wary of an American retreat into isolationism at a time when Europe needs Washington's economic and military might to help create a new security framework for the continent.

"The greatest danger for preserving American commitment lies in unilateralism, the refusal of international responsibility and isolationism," Rudolf Scharping, leader of German's opposition Social Democrats, says in a speech prepared for delivery to the conference Sunday.

"Such voices seem to be getting louder of late in the U.S. they could have the fatal consequences of strengthening similar inclinations in Europe," he adds.

Clinton nominee threatened by abortion issue

WASHINGTON (R) — Dr. Henry Foster, President Bill Clinton's nominee to be surgeon-general, disclosed Friday he had performed "fewer than a dozen abortions" as a practicing physician, complicating his prospects for confirmation.

But the White House said Mr. Clinton knew Dr. Foster's background and was "well satisfied" that his overall record would outweigh the concerns of anti-abortion organisations.

Dr. Foster, a 61-year-old Tennessee obstetrician, was named by the president Thursday to fill a post vacated by firing of Joycelyn Elders for her outspoken views on sex and drugs.

His nomination was controversial with conservative groups even before he acknowledged, in response to news media inquiries, that he had performed abortions in his nearly 30 years of private medical practice.

"In that period of almost three decades... I believed that I performed fewer than a dozen pregnancy terminations. None were in outpatient settings all were in hospitals and were primarily to save the lives of women, or because the women had been the victims of rape or incest," he said.

LOS ANGELES (R) — O.J. Simpson's lawyers, defending the football legend on double murder charges, were spending the weekend wrestling with the most compelling and emotional testimony yet in the football legend's double murder trial.

Nicole Brown Simpson's sister, Denise Brown, told a jury Friday how a drunken Simpson humiliated his then-wife by grabbing her crotch in public and once smashed her against a wall and threw her out of his house.

Denise, 37, a raven-haired image of the blonde Nicole, broke down frequently and sobbed as she testified about the relationship between the handsome football star and her beautiful sister during her testimony Friday.

Simpson's lead defence attorney, Johnnie Cochran, suggested to reporters after the day's hearings that Ms. Brown's dramatic display on the witness stand might have been orchestrated.

Ms. Brown's testimony was frequently interrupted by defence attorneys asking for so-called sidebar conversations — in which the judge confers with lawyers out of earshot of the jury — in order to object to her evidence.

Mr. Cochran later told reporters he asked the judge for the consultations because he felt Ms. Brown's testimony was not fair. "If it's planned, is that fair?" he said.

But legal experts speculated that if the defence attacked the grieving sister when it gets its turn to question her Monday, that could further damage their client's case.

In the so-called "trial of the century," Simpson, who became a household name in America as a spokesman, actor and TV pitchman, has pleaded not guilty to murdering his ex-wife and her friend Ronald Goldman on June 12, 1994.

Providing the most dramatic testimony yet at the football legend's trial as millions of TV viewers looked on, Ms. Brown lashed into Simpson,



Angolan Chief-of-Staff General Joao Baptista de Matos (left) and his UNITA counterpart General Arlindo Chinda Pena "Ben-Ben", at Waku-Kongo, Angola's chief and the UNITA rebel

Angolan rebel group to meet after ceasefire accord; summit agreed

LISBON (AFP) — Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi has called a meeting from Monday of his UNITA movement in central Angola, following an agreement on a cessation of hostilities in the war-torn country, a Portuguese daily reported Saturday.

The Jornal De Noticias reported, quoting a statement of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) that "more than 1,000 delegates from all the country's provinces" would gather in central Bailundo.

It said the meeting would last until Feb. 10, but did not give further details.

Also Saturday, the Angolan News Agency (ANGOP) monitored here said that Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos had received a letter sent several weeks ago by Mr. Savimbi agreeing to a summit meeting.

The summit would "restore the confidence of the Angolan people and international community, as well as seek solutions to consolidate peace and national reconciliation," the agency said.

No date was mentioned for the summit.

The latest developments came after Angola's military chiefs and UNITA agreed to a complete cessation of hostilities Friday, keeping the precarious Luanda peace accords which ended its 20-year civil war last November on track.

A joint statement prepared by United Nations specialists after the two-day talks agreed on a complete ceasefire and to regroup troops in five zones in the country to avoid further confrontations in breach of the Nov. 20 accords.

The breakthrough came after face-to-face talks between Angolan chief-of-staff

General Joao Baptista de Matos and his UNITA counterpart, General Arlindo Chinda Pena "Ben-Ben", at Waku-Kongo, in the west of the country.

They agreed to disengage their troops, currently facing each other at Uije in the north, and Huambo in the centre, between Feb. 15 and March 15.

The document also allows for an improvement in the chain of communications, setting up regular meetings between both sides' military chiefs in different regions aimed at avoiding further clashes.

The two sides also agreed to cooperate on the lifting of an estimated 20 million landmines laid since an upsurge in the fighting in October 1992.

Lists of prisoners of war on both sides will be given to the Red Cross to facilitate their early release.

Khmer Rouge 'weakened by defectors'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attempts of the Khmer Rouge guerrillas to recapture power in Cambodia are being stymied by thousands of defectors and a steady reduction in the territory they control, State Department officials said Friday.

Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord said Cambodian officials have reported as many as 6,000 defectors, he said. U.S. figures are in the "several thousand" range.

Mr. Lord and Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott briefed reporters on their recent visit to Cambodia and several other Asian countries.

Mr. Talbott said it was significant that a number of defectors are coming out with their families.

Last year, there were widespread reports that the Khmer Rouge was receiving assistance from elements in Thai military, Mr. Talbott said he is satisfied that Thai government policy of "no support for the Khmer

Rouge" is on track.

The Khmer Rouge was widely believed to have killed a million or more people during its 1975-78 rule over Cambodia. A year ago, it scored impressive battlefield victories against government forces, prompting concern here about the stability of Cambodia's fledgling democracy.

Despite the guerrilla group's recent setbacks, Mr. Lord said, "we will never be complacent about this threat."

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Nicole Simpson's sister poses problem for defence



Catherine Boe testifies during the O.J. Simpson double-murder trial in Los Angeles. Ms. Boe, a neighbour of Nicole Brown-Simpson, recalled incidents of discord between Simpson and his then-wife during divorce proceedings (AFP photo)

who she has openly accused of murdering her sister.

She testified that at a crowded bar in 1989, a drunken Simpson grabbed his wife between the legs and boasted to strangers, "this is where babies come from and this belongs to me," Ms. Brown testified.

In another episode in the 1980s, Ms. Brown said Simpson exploded in rage when they returned one night from a Mexican restaurant with several friends and she told him that "he took Nicole for granted."

"He started yelling — me? I don't take her for granted. I do everything," Ms. Brown said.

"A whole fight broke out. Pictures started flying off the walls. Clothes started flying down the stairs," she said, tears streaming down her face and her voice trembling. "He grabbed Nicole and told her to get out of the house."

"He picked her up and threw her against the wall. He picked her up and threw her out of the house. She ended up falling on her elbows and her butt," Ms. Brown said.

As Ms. Brown dabbed tears from her eyes, Deputy

District Attorney Christopher Darden asked Judge Lance Ito to stop the session for the day so she could regain her composure. Judge Ito agreed and sent the jury back to their hotel until Monday, when she is due to resume her testimony.

Ms. Brown's appearance on the witness stand ended the first week of testimony in the case.

Meanwhile, the New York Daily News reported that a resident of the Brentwood area of Los Angeles where Ms. Nicole and Mr. Goldman were slain told police they saw a white Ford Bronco that could match those of Simpson's close friend, Al Cowlings, speeding away from the murder scene.

John McKinnon, the paper reported, wrote down the first three letters of the licence plate — 3DH — which matched the first three digits of Mr. Cowlings' licence.

Mr. Cowlings was the man who drove Simpson on his highly publicised "flight" from the police on June 17 last year, the day he was due to be arrested for the murders.

The case against Simpson is that he committed the murders after driving to his ex-wife's condominium in his own white Ford Bronco.

Simpson apparently spied on his estranged wife and repeatedly had bitter arguments with her, former neighbours of Nicole Simpson testified Friday.

Carl Colby said he saw the former American football hero walking around Ms. Simpson's home late one evening, apparently trying to look in. The incident took place in April 1992, when Simpson and Ms. Simpson were separated. They divorced later that year.

Mr. Colby's wife, Catherine Boe, said she witnessed more than one bitter argument between the couple and heard Simpson accuse his estranged wife of romantic involvement with other men.

"I gather that he was angry at her thinking that she had been with another man. And she was angry at him for being angry at her," said Ms. Boe, who lived next door to Ms. Simpson's house in 1992.

When she told Simpson she was convinced his wife was faithful, Ms. Boe said, "he scoffed at me, as though to indicate that I shouldn't believe her."

Human receives pig's kidney transplant

GOTHENBURG, Sweden (AFP) — Swedish doctors have provisionally transplanted a pig's kidney into a human patient, the Sahlgrenska sjukhuset University Hospital in Gothenburg announced. It said a team at the hospital headed by Professor Matsias Aurell carried out the operation on a patient who had volunteered to undergo it. The kidney was suffused with the patient's blood before being transplanted during an hour-long operation. The organ is being kept in a container outside the patient's body, the hospital said. "We are watching the reactions of the patient and observing whether he is producing urine," Dr. Aurell said. The aim, he added, was to make pig's kidney transplants feasible by the year 2000. Dr. Aurell received 875,000 kronor (\$117,000) from the Inga and Arne Lundberg Foundation to carry out the transplant.

Branagh says computers could replace actors

LISBON (R) — British film star Kenneth Branagh has told an interviewer he believes the day may be coming when real actors are replaced in movies by computer-generated images. Branagh, who played in and directed movie versions of the Shakespeare classics *Henry V* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, made the comment in an interview to promote his latest film *Frankenstein*, the creator of a human monster.

"In the cinema technological advances are phenomenal. I've no idea if the cinema will still be using actors in a few years' time. They may all be created by computers," he told Portugal's Independent weekly in the interview published Friday. In the movie based on the classic horror story by Mary Shelley, Branagh plays a doctor in 18th century Switzerland who gives life to a corpse and creates a monster, he cannot control. "It was the dawn of the industrial revolution and changes that would take place from then onwards were unimaginable," Branagh said of the *Frankenstein* story. "People's lives changed radically. Today we are seeing a similar phenomenon in the genetic area. He added, "all this will lead to the idea of the creation of life and today, as yesterday, the question continues to be whether it is possible to create life and what will create it, who will control the process." "In the last few days I have been thinking over the subject and have become increasingly intrigued by the question."

Lancome frees Rossellini for other projects

PARIS (AP) — The upscale cosmetics unit of France's L'Oreal announced that it will release actress and model Isabella Rossellini from her contract at the end of this year. Rossellini, 42, has represented Lancome in print and TV ads worldwide for more than a decade. "During this period, Lancome has developed its range of products and its sales throughout the world," Lancome and Rossellini announced in a joint statement. But Rossellini "wished to pursue other projects in the world of cosmetics and perfume," the statement said. To allow her to pursue these projects, Lancome said it will release her from the exclusivity clause in her contract at the end of 1995. However, Rossellini is allowing Lancome to use photos and video of her beyond 1995.

Jeanne Moreau to head Cannes festival jury

PARIS (AP) — Actress Jeanne Moreau, star of *Jules And Jim* and *Viva Maria*, will head the jury for the 48th annual Cannes Film Festival to be held May 17-28, organisers said Friday. Miss Moreau, 67, and about a dozen other jury members to be announced later will decide which of 23 films wins the coveted Golden Palm Award, along with best actor, actress and director. The panel also awards special jury prizes if it wishes. Last year's jury, co-president by Clint Eastwood and Catherine Deneuve, awarded the Golden Palm to Pulp Fiction by American filmmaker Quentin Tarantino. The Cannes festival is the premier international film gathering.

Human receives
pig's kidney
transplant

GOTHENBURG (AFP) — Swedish doctors have provisionally transplanted a pig's kidney into a human patient, the hospital in Gothenburg announced. It said the professor of surgery, Mats Andersson, who had performed the operation, had volunteered to undergo it. The kidney, which was from a pig, was placed in the patient's body during the operation. The patient, who is 55 years old, is recovering well. The doctors are now observing the patient's body to see if the kidney is producing urine. The patient is expected to be discharged from hospital in a few days.

Branagh says
computers can
replace actors

LISBON (R) — British star Kenneth Branagh told an interviewer he believes the day may come when real actors are replaced by computer-generated images. He said he had played in many movies, including Shakespeare's Hamlet, and that he was now looking for a new challenge. He said he was interested in the idea of using computers to create characters, and that he was working on a project in which he would play a character who is a computer-generated image. He said he was excited about the possibility of using computers to create characters, and that he was working on a project in which he would play a character who is a computer-generated image.

Lancome freed
Rosellini for
other projects

PARIS (AP) — The French government has freed actress Rosellini from her contract with Lancome, allowing her to pursue other projects. The government said that Rosellini's contract with Lancome was not in line with French labor laws, and that she was free to leave the company. Rosellini, who is 35 years old, has been with Lancome for several years. She has appeared in several Lancome advertisements, and has been a model for the company. She is now free to pursue other projects, and is expected to appear in several films in the coming months.

Jeanne Moreau
to head Cannes
festival jury

PARIS (AP) — Jeanne Moreau, star of the 1960s French New Wave, has been named to head the jury for the Cannes Film Festival. The festival, which is held annually in Cannes, France, is one of the most prestigious film festivals in the world. Moreau, who is 60 years old, has been a successful actress and director. She has appeared in several films, and has directed several films of her own. She is expected to lead the jury for the festival, which will be held in Cannes from May 17 to May 28.



File picture dated Jan. 28, 1995 shows parched soil on the bed of the Valseque Lake near Madrid. While Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands have suffered massive rainfalls which caused flooded rivers and extensive damage,

parts of Spain such as the region of Andalusia are suffering a severe drought which is endangering the region's drinking water (AFP photo)

Roads choked as Dutch flood evacuees return home

AMSTERDAM (R) — Dutch roads were choked with cars and trucks Saturday as 55,000 flood evacuees made their way home but 140,000 people remained in temporary shelters.

The area around the eastern city of Nijmegen was declared safe but downstream areas of the Mass (Meuse) and Waal rivers still faced the threat of weakened dikes collapsing.

"The (provincial) authorities have told me there is no longer any danger (around Nijmegen), but this does not apply to territory further west," Interior Minister Hans Dijkstal said.

"The water levels are receding, but the dike inspectors have not yet declared these places safe," Mr. Dijkstal said.

Nijmegen Mayor Ed D'Hondt said water levels had dropped 1.25 metres (4 ft) since their peak Wednesday.

Officials said water levels on the Rhine, Mass and Waal rivers were now falling at a rate of 60 cm (24 inches) a day.

Authorities said inhabitants of the remaining evacuated areas would not be allowed to return home Saturday, but there was a chance they would be allowed home Sunday.

Police said roads leading to the safe areas were choked with long columns of vehicles, even though the authorities were trying to achieve a phased return to prevent congestion.

Mr. Dijkstal said the sick and elderly would not return

until Sunday to avoid causing them any unnecessary discomfort.

Some 15,000 evacuees from the southern province of Limburg, the first to be flooded, began returning to their homes on Friday after suffering their second major flood in 13 months.

Almost a quarter of a million Dutch people were forced to abandon their homes this week as ancient dikes threatened to collapse under the pressure of rivers swollen by heavy rainfall and melting snow in Germany, France and Belgium.

The week-long crisis sparked intense criticism of the government and environmentalists for delaying work to strengthen this low-lying country's vital flood defences.

"I feel very bitter," Limburg housewife Rex Pals told Reuters. "They must build a new and bigger dike. They should flood the Hague. Then we'll see what the government does."

Prime Minister Wim Kok announced a compensation scheme late Friday, but many of the flood victims were disappointed.

Mr. Kok said households would have to bear the first 2,000 guilders (\$1,176) of damage themselves but that the government would reimburse any damage above this amount.

For those who also suffered in the December 1993 floods, the threshold will be lowered to 1,000 guilders (\$588).

Companies will have to

bear the first 2,000 guilders of damage and will receive 65 per cent of any additional costs, or 90 per cent if they were hit by the 1993 floods.

Business leaders were angry the government did not plan to reimburse companies for revenues lost as a result of evacuation or flooding.

The Chamber of Commerce in Gelderland province estimates that this damage alone is one billion guilders (\$588 million).

The chairman of the Dutch Employers Organisation VNO, Alexander Rinnooy Kan, said this was unreasonable, because the government was to blame for neglecting dike maintenance.

As much of Western Europe looked to the sky for relief from devastating floods, drought-hit Spain continued to pray for rain.

While the Netherlands and Germany seemed to be containing their worst floods of the century, five consecutive years of below average rainfall have accumulated to bring central and southern Spain the worst drought of the century.

The chronic lack of water has caused millions of people to have water supplies cut for many hours a day, destroyed a wide range of crops, ruined farmers and become an increasing threat to the environment.

The most public manifestation of the effects of the drought came at the end of January when the World Alpine Skiing Championships scheduled in the Sierra Nevada, outside

Grenada in southern Andalusia, had to be postponed until next year because the slopes were bare of snow for the time in 25 years.

Spain's northern regions of Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria and the Basque country are kept lush and green by frequent rain coming in from the Atlantic.

Here, heavy rainstorms caused some minor flooding while floodwater levels in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Britain were at their peak.

But the central plateau and southern and eastern areas of the country, protected from northerly weather systems by ranges of mountains, are brown and parched for much of the year as dry, sunny winters follow dry, sunny summers.

When the traditionally wetter months of spring and autumn fail to live up to expectations, the country is in trouble. And this is what has happened for the past five years.

Spain's reservoirs nationwide are now at 23 per cent of capacity compared with 30 per cent a year ago and with an average 35 per cent over the past five years.

In the giant, southernmost region of Andalusia they are at 10.7 per cent, the lowest for several months, according to the local Agriculture Council.

Five Andalusian provincial capitals — Cadiz, Granada, Jaen, Malaga and Seville — are under water rationing.

Crops hit include olives, cereals, cotton rice and citrus and other fruits.

Ecuador concerned by delay
in final truce talks with Peru

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Ecuador's delegate at talks aimed at ending a violent border dispute with Peru said early Saturday he was "deeply concerned" over the delay in reaching a final ceasefire agreement.

Delegates from the two countries, as well as three other Latin American nations — Argentina, Chile and Brazil — and the United States, were locked in intense negotiations to find common ground for a final peace agreement.

On Friday the delegates had reached a provisional ceasefire agreement which was sent to the capital of Peru and Ecuador and of the four guarantor countries to be approved.

Reading from a statement, Ambassador Marcelo Fernandez de Cordoba said that while the delegates from the six countries were struggling to reach a ceasefire agreement, Ecuadorian border posts had been attacked by Peruvian bombers and artillery.

The Ecuadorian delegation hopes the secondary obstacles and inconveniences encountered until now will cease, for once and for all, to disturb what is substantive to the problem," he said.

Responding to the Ecuadorian statement, Peruvian delegate Ambassador Eduardo Ponce Vizanco said he was surprised by the Ecuadorian delegate's pessimism as the negotiations were in their final stages.

"I don't understand the pessimistic nature of the statement just as we are about to embark, perhaps I



Peruvian troops cheer as they deploy in a battle zone on a tributary of the Cenepa River on the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border, 1200 kilometres north of Lima (AFP photo)

hope, on the final stage of the negotiations," Mr. Ponce Vizanco said.

He said Ecuador had launched a deliberate propaganda campaign designed to confuse public opinion and identify Peru as the aggressor in the border conflict.

Neither delegate would comment on the nature of the obstacles delaying an end to the negotiations.

Fighting between Peru and Ecuador erupted last week in a disputed border area of the Amazon jungle known as Cordillera De Los Condores to which both countries lay claim. The dispute centres on a 212-square mile (340 square kilometres) area which has yet to be demarcated as called for in a 1942 treaty.

In Ecuador's capital Quito, a high-ranking military official said Peruvian warplanes

and helicopters had launched their third attack in as many days on its defence positions.

He said Peruvian warplanes and helicopters bombed the Cueva De Los Tallos and Base Sur military posts, but Peruvian infantry did not participate in the attacks.

"The intensity of these attacks are less than the ones suffered Thursday and Wednesday," he said.

The official said Ecuador continued to hold all of its defence positions in the disputed area and added that there were no reports of casualties as a result of Friday's attacks.

Earlier Friday, an Ecuadorian general said that 60 people had died and 44 were injured since hostilities broke out with Peru over the disputed jungle area said to be rich in gold.

The general, a member of the Armed Forces High Command, told Reuters about 50 Peruvians and 10 Ecuadorian soldiers have been killed, while 30 Peruvians and 14 Ecuadorians have been wounded since hostilities started a week ago.

Peru, however, said Thursday that only 54 people have died, 44 of them Ecuadorians.

The presidents of Bolivia, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela, meeting at a summit in the Venezuelan city of Cumaná, called upon the two warring countries to make new efforts to end the conflict.

"We are very concerned because, despite the fact we have been talking about a ceasefire for the last week, it still hasn't been achieved," said Colombian President Ernesto Samper.

Cosmonaut
conducts
glow test
as shuttle
chases Mir

SPACE CENTRE, Houston (AP) — Russian Cosmonaut Vladimir Titov hoisted a gleaming red satellite from Discovery's cargo bay early Saturday to help NASA pinpoint what causes a cosmic phenomenon called shuttle glow.

The experiment was one of several secondary tasks for Discovery's crew leading up to the mission's highlight — a planned rendezvous Monday with the Russian space station Mir.

Commander Titov's second cosmonaut to fly aboard a shuttle, grappled with the boxy 2,800-pound (1,200-kilogram) satellite using Discovery's 50-foot (15-metre) robot arm.

He lifted the craft, called Spartan, high overhead and aimed its ultraviolet telescope toward the shuttle tail for a 4½-hour study. The telescope was aimed later toward a shuttle jet to gather ultraviolet images of exhaust plumes, and then placed back in the cargo bay.

Scientists hope to confirm a theory that the faint glow surrounding some shuttle surfaces in flight is caused by molecules of atomic oxygen and nitrogen combining as the spacecraft slams into them.

The glow could interfere with delicate science instruments, and the military is interested in the phenomenon as a way of tracking missiles.

Spartan is to be released next week for two days of free-flying astronomical research before crew members retrieve it for the trip home.

Mission Control continued monitoring a leaky shuttle steering jet as Discovery pursued Mir. The leak was detected after Friday's launch and was still spewing jet propellant into space early Saturday.

NASA called the seepage minor and said it would have no impact on Monday's rendezvous, assuming it doesn't worsen. If it does, Discovery will have to stay at least 1,000 feet (300 metres) from Mir instead of coming within 35 feet (10.5 metres).

Late Saturday morning, Commander James Wetherbee said that most of the time the leaking propellant looks like "a very slow snowstorm," with just a few particles, "but every 30 seconds or so, it looks like a geyser."

The 250-mile-high (400-kilometre-high) rendezvous with Mir is the top priority of the eight-day flight. It's intended as practice for the first shuttle-Mir docking in June.

Serbian helicopters fly into Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Helicopters from Serbia fly fresh supplies to Bosnian Serb forces in violation of a U.N.-imposed "no-fly" zone, a U.N. official said Saturday.

The flights also broke a supply embargo by the Serbian government against the Bosnian Serbs, said U.N. spokesman Paul Risley in Zagreb, Croatia.

U.N. peacekeepers observed some 15-20 Serbian helicopters landing Friday evening near the besieged Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, a U.N.-designated "safe zone" in eastern Bosnia, said Mr. Risley.

"These were Serbian aircraft originating from Serbia proper," Mr. Risley told the Associated Press. "It is not the first incident of the kind, but we have never had such a great number of aircraft flying at one time."

Last fall, he added, up to 80 flights a day were made across the Serbian-Bosnian border, but never with such a large group of aircraft.

Ironically, Friday marked six months since Serbia announced it was cutting off all but humanitarian supplies to the Bosnian Serbs because they refused to accept an international plan to end their war against Bosnia's Muslim-led government.

International monitors on the border between Serbia and Bosnia said that the embargo is largely being observed. As a result, the United Nations eased sanctions imposed against Serbia for fomenting the Bosnian civil war.

Yet there have been repeated reports of such helicopter flights, which are low and

slow and can thus escape detection by high-flying NATO jets monitoring the "no-fly" zone.

In Bosnia, there was continued fighting in the northwest Bihać region. Some 400 detonations shook the most hotly contested area of the Bihać pocket, Velika Kladusa, Friday, said U.N. spokesman Lt. Col. Gary Coward.

The helicopter flights came at a time when all sides seem to be using a month-old ceasefire to prepare for more war.

On Friday, the most senior U.N. official in Yugoslavia warned that Balkan violence is sure to increase unless peace is negotiated now.

"Throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, confrontation lines remain dangerously close, and armed forces continue their preparations for wider conflict," warned Yasushi Akashi, the top U.N. official in former Yugoslavia. Without "immediate steps to strengthen the ceasefire, the threat of renewed conflict is real."

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke is meeting Muslim and Croat leaders from Bosnia Sunday in Munich to try and bolster the U.S.-backed federation those sides formed last March.

The aim is to convince the Bosnian Serbs that they are isolated, and thus to help prevent a new outbreak of war, Mr. Holbrooke said.

He conceded, however, that this is tough, given the divisions between Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, who fought a bitter year-long war with each other that ended with the federation agreement last spring.

Meanwhile, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic warned that any renewal of the war in neighbouring Croatia would draw his forces into the fray.

Croatian President Franjo Tudjman has said U.N. peacekeepers separating his forces from rebel Serbs must leave Croatia after their mandate expires March 31.

Bosnia's war began in April 1992 when Bosnian Serbs rebelled against the republic's vote to secede from Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, now composed only of Serbia and Montenegro. More than 200,000 people are dead or missing.

U.N. officials said Saturday Bosnian Serb commanders have held direct talks with Bosnian Croat officers in a sign the two sides may be ready to forge separate agreements.

The United Nations mission announced what it called "a major breakthrough" in ceasefire discussions held Friday between Serb and Croat army officers, who met despite the conspicuous absence of the Muslim-led Bosnian government army.

Bosnian Croat Defence Council (HVO) generals agreed with Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) generals in a meeting in the central town of Gornji Vakuf on mapping confrontation lines between Kupres in central Bosnia to the Croatian border on the west.

Senior officers from the BSA First and Second Krajina Corps and Croat commanders from the HVO pledged to submit maps of the front lines in the region to allow for the eventual separation of forces.

Burma's attacks on Karens could
undermine diplomatic offensive

BANGKOK (AFP) — The Burmese military junta's battlefield successes against rebel Karen forces and their allies may undermine its overtures to foreign capitals, according to diplomats and observers here.

Besides ruffling the United States and Australia, which have led nations pressing the junta to move towards democracy, the offensive may alienate neighbouring Thailand. Bangkok has led a policy of "constructive engagement" with Rangoon up to now.

In the face of renewed instability on the border and more than 10,000 refugees on its soil, there are growing demands within Thailand for a review of the conciliatory approach.

Burmese government forces had a spectacular success in taking the Manerplaw Headquarters of the Karen National Union (KNU) and its allies last week. The KNU is the largest rebel group fighting the military junta.

Government soldiers are now targeting other KNU bases. But their action could force the Association of South East Asian Nations — which groups Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei — to rethink its cautious engagement policy, adopted largely at Bangkok's behest.

"I'm afraid the fighting might affect ASEAN's constructive engagement policy," Thai Foreign Minister Thanin Shinawatra was quoted as saying by the Bangkok press Saturday.

"We're worried that if the fighting continues, ASEAN will take the view that it is no longer a good policy," he said.

His statement was a far cry from Bangkok's advocacy of a soft approach towards Rangoon. The Thai government opposed Western sanctions in the wake of massacres of pro-democracy demonstrators in Rangoon in 1988.

In clear sign of Bangkok's nerves, Thai Prime Minister

Chuan Leekpai announced he would pay an unprecedented three-day trip to the Burmese border from Sunday.

On his schedule is Mae Sot, adjacent to an encampment of 800 Karens under constant fire from junta forces.

The Karens have been on the run since December when the junta overturned its pursuit of a peaceful solution to problems with the ethnic minority.

Despite the capture of the Karen stronghold, most observers believe the junta is nowhere near a decisive victory over the rebels who have shown their ability to mount a protracted guerrilla war.

Although the Karens' credibility as a fighting force has taken a blow, the image of the military junta — the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) has been even more badly affected, according to a Western diplomat.

Yalta anniversary passes with little fanfare

YALTA, Ukraine (R) — Fifty years ago leaders of the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union met in this Black Sea resort to determine the shape of Europe after World War II, but Saturday's anniversary passed with little fanfare.

Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin spent eight days from Feb. 4, 1945, in the cliff-top Livadia Palace overlooking the sea.

Their deliberations, held as the allies had all but won the war in Europe against the Nazis, produced a continent with a defeated Germany divided into four control zones and eventually split in two.

It set the stage for the creation of the United Nations later that year and also decided the fate of Eastern Europe's other nations. Poland expanded its territory but eventually fell under Moscow's control, like the region's other peoples, despite the best intentions of Churchill and Roosevelt.

Commemorations were low-key and unceremonial, at least partly because of post-

soviet politics. Yalta, on the Crimean Peninsula, now is part of impoverished post-Soviet Ukraine.

"All I can say is I hope all these events will help us, the people who live here," said pensioner Zinaida Ivanova. "Maybe if lots of leaders come here, we'll get more water and electricity and will be able to buy more in the shops."

But no leaders — or even middle-ranking officials — covered on Yalta during its traditional February thaw.

A symposium attended by a handful of academics was scheduled for the resort — summer playground of tsars and Communist leaders whose tourism industry is in a tailspin as a result of crumbling facilities, water shortages and erratic heating.

Crimea's pro-Russian authorities, pursuing a campaign to loosen Ukraine's control over the region, staged a meeting of parliamentarians. In attendance were Russian conservatives and groups from two others separatist regions in the for-

mer Soviet Union — Abkhazia in Georgia and Dnestr in Moldova.

At least one of commemorative meetings planned by a Western institution was cancelled when organisers concluded that local conditions were inadequate to invite top-level guests.

"This anniversary is by no means a big event for us," said Pyotr Makukha, editor of a local newspaper and deputy chairman of the Crimean Resort Association.

"No one here is taking advantage of it. All the intrigue is being generated in the top Crimean political echelons."

The local economy, heavily dependent on the annual summer influx of Russian and Western tourists, was devastated last year by severe water shortages which closed dozens of health spas. Residents lined up in the streets to fill buckets with water brought in by tanker trucks.

Political disputes between Crimea and the Ukrainian government — often exaggerated by Russian media

— frightened off holidaymakers, as did a cholera epidemic which came within a few kilometres of Yalta itself.

The anniversary has created a minefield for Ukraine's leadership, which has been trying to bring Crimean separatists to heel since the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991.

The Kiev government has organised an academic gathering of its own for next week — attended only by local diplomats and U.N. and pan-European representatives — and is trying hard to pay no attention to the events staged in Yalta itself.

"The conference was important in that all sides decided not to persecute the German people but to destroy the Nazi machine," Foreign Ministry spokesman Olexander Tsvetkov said.

"It also decided on the creation of the United Nations and on Ukrainian membership. But some decisions were taken from a position of strength without due account of the interests of the peoples concerned."

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Grave violations

MOSCOW HAS received a strong rebuke when the 33-nation Council of Europe decided Friday to suspend membership talks with Russia until it stops attacking Chechnya. The Strasbourg-based council also condemned "the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force" by the Russian army in the breakaway Caucasus republic. No doubt the council's action against Moscow has been motivated by the grave and systematic human rights violations in Chechnya and the erosion of parliamentary democracy in the Russian Federation. That also prompted the council to call on the Russians to amend their constitution to give parliament more control over the executive branch. Many human rights activists worldwide have put the blame for Russia's unsatisfactory human rights record and lack of workable democracy on the disproportionate domination of President Boris Yeltsin over the Duma.

It is obvious also that the council's wrath was triggered in part by the submissions of Mr. Sergei Kovalyov, Russia's top human rights official, that there have been cases of crucifixion and castration of Chechen prisoners of war, that school girls have been raped and that draft-age youth have been summarily executed by advancing Russian soldiers. The Russian activist also described the West as "spineless" for expressing only a muted criticism of his country's atrocities in Chechnya. One can argue on this characterisation of the international community's response to the crisis in Chechnya, since Russia's violent campaign against the Chechens has been going on for months now without any serious protests.

Judging from Russian pronouncements, Russia's military intervention is not projected to stop until all Chechen resistance is wiped out. It is anachronistic in the extreme that a superpower can still resort to raw power with apparent impunity to subjugate another people who are completely different from it. International opposition to the raging war in that Muslim country calls for a resolute reaction from all countries, including those with an economic leverage to exercise. Otherwise, the Council of Europe's action would remain abstract and ineffective.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE CAIRO summit, which grouped the leaders of Jordan, Palestine, Egypt and Israel was described by some as a tool to save Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his Labour Party from Israeli society's blame for failure to deal with the Palestinians, while others have considered the summit a means to strengthen Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's stand on the eve of his visit to the United States, said Tareq Masarweh. The Al Ra'i columnist said that the four leaders had actually sought to save the peace process from collapse in light of the violence that has erupted over the past few months in the occupied territories and from the Israeli failure so far to fully implement the Oslo and the Cairo agreements. The writer said that Israel can go on claiming that it wants peace and boast before the world that it has reached a peace treaty with Jordan, returning to the Kingdom its land and water, and it could go on boasting that it has given the Palestinians self-rule in parts of Palestine and is negotiating with them wider self-rule. But Israel should realise that peace has not been achieved yet since the Palestine question, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, has not been settled and some 3.5 million Palestinians have not yet regained their legitimate rights, he said. He said that there can be no genuine and lasting peace in the whole region unless the Palestinian people have won their independence on their soil no matter what claims Israel continues to announce to the world. The Cairo summit has tried to save the peace process from collapse and it is indeed Israel's duty now to ensure the success of this joint effort.

THE CALL by Egyptian journalist Mohammad Hassanein Haikal on the Arab Nation to possess nuclear weapons is a very dangerous one and would not serve the interests of the Arab people, according to Saleh Qassem, a writer in Al Ra'i daily Saturday. Haikal wants the Arabs to possess nuclear arms in order to offset Israel's nuclear power but the move would eventually cause a balance of terror in the Middle East, said the writer. The Arabs should take a lesson from the superpowers, which realised that unless they resort to reason and come to agreement on ways of ensuring peaceful co-existence, they will be following a course of destruction that spares no nation on the face of the Earth, said the writer. A safer course of action to be adopted by the Arab countries, continued the writer, is to enlist the world community's help in exercising pressure on Israel to make it give up its nuclear option and work towards securing a nuclear free zone in the region, he said.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Jordanian-Palestinian trade accord next to nothing

AFTER THREE days of hesitation, the official text of the Jordanian-Palestinian agreements signed on Jan. 26 was released to the Jordanian media. Reading the trade agreement reveals that there was actually no agreement, simply a sort of a letter of intent which is not binding. The prices of shares in Amman stock exchange dropped instead of rising, which was a rational response, because dealers in the market were able to understand the trick.

The trade agreement between Jordan and Palestine does not necessarily mean that exchange of goods and services will start tomorrow or very soon. It does not guarantee that the trade will start at all, despite the empty clause which referred to the principle of free trade and freedom of movement of commodities of national origin, fully exempted from customs and all related taxes.

Paragraph (A) of the first article did mention this principle, but paragraph (B) of the same article rendered the free trade clause null and void. It simply stipulated that the implementation will start after agreeing on the list of limited commodities which can be revised every six months with a view to expanding it. We don't know what commodities were included in the first list, and how it will be expanded in the future as long as the Palestinian-Israeli economic agreement determines what commodities the Palestine National Authority (PNA) can import from Jordan tax exempt. The PNA cannot exceed the list unless its agreement with Israel is amended.

Under the well-known restrictions, the concept of free

trade is meaningless. The commodities initially agreed upon are not known. In fact, we don't know whether there is an agreed list of commodities. It seems that everything is left to the joint committees, which have the habit of failing to meet.

If applied, paragraph (C) of the same article is meaningless. It allows the exchange of other goods and services of national origin, which are not included in the list, provided they are subjected to the normal taxes. It seems this is the pattern which will prevail concerning commodities which Israel did not reserve the right to veto.

Article two referred the procedures of trade to a joint committee at the ministerial level to be formed in the future. The third article called for the formation of a similar committee to perform the same task but at the level of experts. This means that trade will continue to be suspended pending the deliberations of those committees, which are not formed yet; and no one can speculate what conclusions they will arrive at if they meet at all.

Even the Palestinian transit activity, which is working normally without any agreement, was agreed to be regulated in accordance with another agreement to be negotiated at some time in the future. It is difficult to speculate when and if such an agreement will be concluded, and what would be its contents.

The exchange of agricultural produce was dealt with in article five. It goes without saying that the subject was left to another joint committee. It is not known if and when

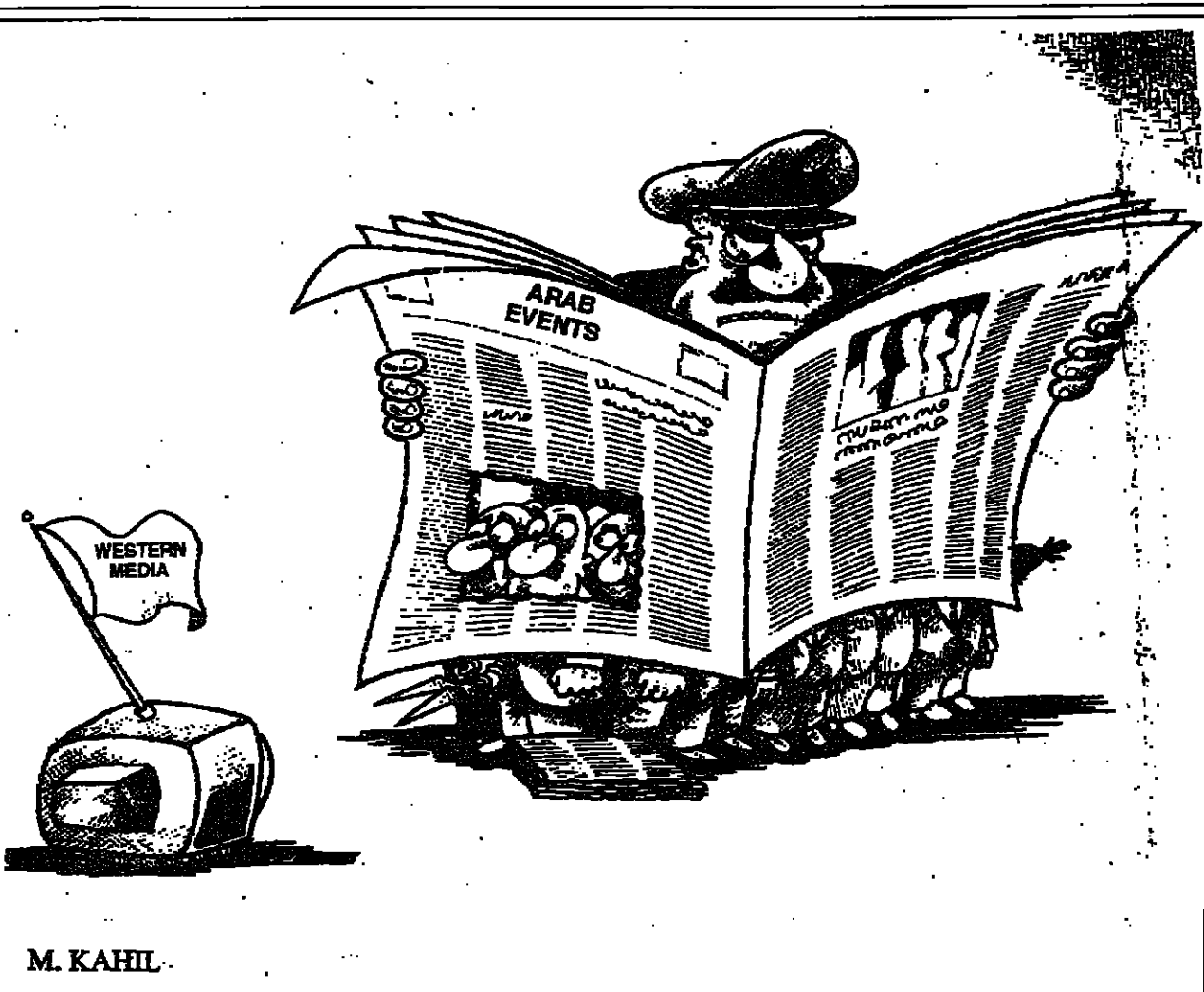
such a committee will be formed or whether it will meet. Article six deals with the free zone area project in the Jordan Valley. The verdict of the agreement was that technical and legal studies concerning this project should be initiated.

Jordanian fuel products, which Israel was kind enough to allow the Palestinians to import to cover the domestic consumption of the West Bank and Gaza was, according to article seven, left to another agreement to be concluded later on between the Palestinian Energy Department and the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company. Similarly, cement and iron bars, which Israel authorised the Palestinians to import from Jordan, will wait until a special arrangement is worked out (Inshallah) according to article eight.

Article nine decided that electricity connection is worth a study.

Finally, article 10 solemnly stipulates that this agreement is to go into effect between Jordan on one hand and the West Bank and Gaza in the other, which is astonishing. There is in fact no agreement or contract, it is merely an expression of intentions, a contract to enter into contract which is, by definition, no contract.

Unfortunately we are back to square one. The papers which were signed in front of television cameras are simply a laugh. The agreements simply say: Everything is deferred to the future until it is agreed upon by committees which may not be formed.



M. KAHIL

Fight violence with a promise of Palestinian statehood

By Henry Siegman

NEW YORK — The deaths of 19 Israelis in a suicide bombing by Islamic extremists on Jan. 22 convinced many Israelis — including President Ezer Weizman, a longtime dove — that Palestinian self-rule is unworkable. But aborting the peace process and continuing Israeli military control of the occupied territories will not reduce terrorism, for the extremists fear that Palestinian self-rule will succeed, not that it will fail.

Unfortunately, the emotional impact of the bombings does not make for rational political discussion, and that is precisely what the terrorists count on.

The fragile Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accord reached in 1993 hinges on security for Israel, which depends on Yasser Arafat's ability to keep order in the territories, which in turn depends on the prospects of Palestinian statehood.

If the Palestinians are persuaded that there is no chance of achieving their national aspirations — an independent state, not autonomy under Israeli military control — they will reject Mr. Arafat as a traitor. If he loses credibility, there is no way he can maintain any semblance of stability in the territories, and the peace agreement will fall apart.

The 1993 Oslo accords were disintegrating long before the Jan. 22 bombing. Many have attributed this to Mr. Arafat's ineptness and autocracy. But there is a more serious reason behind the disintegration: The accords themselves. They fail in two critical respects.

First, they do not address the only issue that is important to Palestinians: The creation of an independent state.

Some observers have argued that statehood is im-

plicit in the "final stage negotiations" called for within three years of implementation of the agreement. But whether the negotiations will result in statehood is up to Israel.

It is understandable that many Palestinians do not believe that Israeli politics will ever permit their independence. For the prospect of statehood to have remained viable to them, Israel's leaders would have had to stop pursuing policies that contradict the goal of statehood. Instead, the government's equivocation has exacerbated the conflict between the goals of the Oslo agreement and the expansion of settlements in the occupied territories.

The vast majority of Israelis were repulsed by the massacre of 29 Muslim worshippers in Hebron last year. They saw clearly that settlements are an impediment to peace. But Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin failed to remove the settlers from Hebron. It is therefore unlikely that he will be able to deal with the far larger number of settlers in the more complex circumstances he will encounter three years from now.

The Palestinians' scepticism was further fueled by the compromise reached last month which prevents Jews in the West Bank settlement of Efrat from expanding their enclave to one nearby hill but permits them to do so on another hill.

And the government has announced that at least 2,000 new apartments would be built this year near Jerusalem. How could Mr. Arafat possibly establish political credibility in these circumstances?

The other flaw in the accords is the provision for stages of autonomy — first Gaza and Jericho, by other West Bank locales — which are linked to so-called confidence-building measures intended to show the

viability of Palestinian rule.

This quid pro quo approach makes sense when Israel deals with governments whose leaders are firmly in control, such as Egypt's, Jordan's and Syria's. But it makes no sense when dealing with a weak organisation like the PLO. It simply invites extremists to sabotage the agreement with confidence-debilitating measures.

Can the agreement be saved? Perhaps, but only if Mr. Rabin makes peace a higher priority than getting reelected next year. It is not much of a risk. The present course guarantees that he will lose both the peace and the elections.

This means that the government must now affirm that Palestinian statehood is the goal of the peace process and proceed quickly down that path, not only to reinvigorate the talks but also to preclude false Palestinian expectations. By setting the limits of statehood, Israel can disabuse those who entertain the notion that a full return to the pre-1967 borders is possible.

The government also must begin removing settlements now, not two years or five years down the road. The next stage of the agreement, the so-called early empowerment of the West Bank, is doomed if all the settlements stay in place — not to speak of expanding — for they offer irresistible targets to Islamic Jihad, Hamas and other opponents of the agreement.

Mr. Rabin also must make clear to Israelis that terrorism and instability, endemic to the region, are unrelated to the security issues posed by Palestinian statehood. Safeguards can be built into the peace agreement to prevent Palestinian military aggression, but not individual acts of terrorism. Such acts are made more likely by Palestinian frustration.

Some will argue that the recent bombings have precluded Palestinian statehood. But that is to argue that peace between Israel and the Palestinians is impossible. The violence led Mr. Rabin to propose building a "security border" to separate the West Bank from Israel. The inevitable conclusion of such a separation must be the establishment of a Palestinian state.

A genuine reconciliation is perhaps too much to expect after decades of bloodshed. But Oslo was really not about peace, it was about separation. Palestinian statehood is not a reward for good behaviour or good intentions. Rather, it is a desperate Israeli need. The alternative is for Israel to remain locked indefinitely in a deadly embrace with 2 million Palestinians.

Mr. Rabin had public support for his peace policies even during the most controversial phases — for example, when it was revealed that he had arranged talks and supported an agreement with Mr. Arafat. Israelis elected him because he offered a clear alternative to the Likud's advocacy of an untenable status quo. If that support has eroded, it is partly because Labour's alternative has lost its sharp edge.

Perhaps political courage and boldness can no longer carry the day. But it is a risk worth taking, for the alternative is the inevitable collapse of the peace process and the certain defeat of Mr. Rabin in 1996. Only a fool can believe that such an outcome would discourage the terrorists.

The writer, former executive director of the American Jewish Congress, is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He contributed this comment to the New York Times.

Chemical weapons could have been on way out

By Edith M. Lederer
The Associated Press

LONDON — Mustard gas killed nearly 100,000 people in World War I. More recently, Iraq used mustard and nerve gas against the Kurds. Chemicals remain cheap, deadly weapons.

Last month, the world could have taken a big step to outlaw chemical weapons — but didn't.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, the first arms control treaty that calls for elimination of a class of weapons, has been ratified by only 21 countries, even though 159 nations signed it.

When the convention was opened for signatures two years ago, there was optimism that the minimum 65 countries would ratify it so it could come into force at the earliest possible date: Jan. 13, 1995.

Instead on that date, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali sent letters to nearly 140 countries which haven't ratified the convention, saying, "this is not an acceptable state of affairs for the international community."

The Chemical Weapons Convention bans development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention or transfer of chemical weapons to any country and prohibits their use. Participating countries must destroy their stockpiles within 10 years, although a five-year extension is possible in some cases.

John Holm, director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, told a congressional committee last year that about 25 countries have chemical weapons or can produce them, but he has not identified them all.

The 21 countries which have ratified the convention include Germany, Spain, Mexico, Australia, Albania and Bulgaria.

The five acknowledged nuclear powers — the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China — are among the nations that still haven't signed.

But the key laggards are the United States and Russia, which have the world's biggest chemical weapons arsenals.

"If the United States and Russia don't ratify the convention and get rid of chemical weapons and join in the inspection process, then we don't have a treaty," said Patricia Lewis, executive director of the London-based Verification Technology Information Centre.

The Clinton administration has supported the treaty, but is concerned at the slow pace of Russia's destruction of its chemical arsenal. A 1990 agreement between the United States and the then-Soviet Union required both sides to begin to demolish chemical weapons by late 1992.

Russia has not started destroying some 40,000 tonnes of weapons, a project expected to cost \$5 to \$6 billion.

"It is unlikely that the chemical weapons convention will be ratified in the near future," Alexander Kononov, director of the

Centre of Military Policy at Russia's USA and Canada Institute, told the Associated Press in Moscow.

"We do not have safe technology for liquidation of chemical weapons. We do not have a place where to do that. We do not have money," he said.

The United States has done test burns of some of its 31,000-tonne chemical stockpile, which is expected to cost \$8.6 billion to eliminate.

But U.S. officials are concerned that the Russians may be hiding a programme to produce binary weapons, which combine two chemicals that may be harmless on their own but are deadly when put together.

Republican control of the Senate may also affect the treaty's prospects. Sen. Jesse Helms, the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, is highly sceptical of arms control agreements. But, treaty supporters were encouraged when Sen. Helms delegated the treaty to the ranking Republican, Sen. Richard Lugar, who is considered more international minded.

Some senators are also concerned that several countries suspected of developing poison gas — North Korea, Libya, Syria and Egypt — have not signed the convention. Iraq has not signed either, but its chemical weapons capability is being destroyed under the U.N. Security Council resolution ending the Gulf war.

"I think a lot of people are waiting to see what the United States does," said Michael Krepon, president of the Washington-based Henry L. Stimson Centre, which researches national and international security issues.

"If the U.S. opts out of this convention, we're looking at a hollow instrument to combat a very serious problem."

The Provisional Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which is responsible for implementing the treaty, is campaigning to get all 184 U.N. members to sign on.

It hopes at least to get 65 countries to ratify the treaty by July 1, so that the convention would become effective by the end of the year, said spokesman Amil Wadhwa.

"There are enough countries on the way. There are a lot of positive indications, but whether that will happen remains to be seen."

Lewis, however, believes it will be 1996 "at the earliest" before enough countries sign on.

Of the major nuclear powers, France is closest to ratification. Both the Senate and Chamber of Deputies have ratified it, and the final step is for the French President to sign it. A spokeswoman for President Francois Mitterrand said that is expected to happen before the end of the year.

China, one of the first countries to sign the convention, "will submit the document to the legislature for deliberation as soon as possible," according to a foreign ministry spokesman.

Featu
In Shatoi vill
Mount
Cheche
to guer

THE CAUCASUS mountains rise suddenly from the plain round Grozny like a plain round fortress wall. Heading into the valley towards Shatoi is like entering a giant castle gateway. With the side of the valley rising to rain projectiles down.

It is as though this country was designed for guerrilla war. A determined and skilful guerrilla commander could hold off the Russians for months. But this is not what the people in the mountains want. All those who want to fight are in Grozny. The villages do not want the militia fighters — the Chechens — to take up residence because they will bring the Russian bombers back.

Support for the Chechen leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev, seems thin. A Shatoi, a large village of 15,000 now swollen by refugees, Gelya Aslanova, 55, a Russian, runs the main cafe. "They'll probably shoot me for saying it," she said, "but what's Dudayev ever done for me? Where's my pension? It hasn't been paid for two years. What about the roads? The children don't go to school..."

She pointed to the memorial to the dead of the Great Patriotic War, knocked over, locals said, in a Russian air raid. "I've lived here 35 years," she continued. "They were coming over day and night."

Arafat

Sham remained behind bars in Gaza City central prison. Mr. Arafat said police detained more members of the group while he was in jail, but he could not tell who they were. Other Islamic Jihad sources said the new detainees were not influential members.

"It's useless to arrest people like us," Mr. Arafat, a mosque preacher, told AFP. "We are not connected to the armed militants, they are clandestine and unknown or else their operations would not be successful."

Meanwhile, police arrested about ten members and supporters of Hamas, said Emad Fajali, a leader of the group. He said the arrests were made in the past week, and did not include important figures.

Mr. Rabin said Friday Mr. Arafat fears his life is being threatened by Syrian-based Palestinian groups opposed to his peace deal with Israel. Mr. Rabin told Israel Television that Mr. Arafat had expressed his concern at the Cairo summit.

Mr. Rabin said Mr. Arafat joined his demand that Damascus stop providing a haven for an alliance of 10 Palestinian groups set on wrecking the 1993 Israel-PLO peace accord.

"In the four-way talks I and a partner, Arafat, demand that the Syrians stop... Palestinian terror organisations... (including) Islamic Jihad, which have been in Syria."

"As strange as it seems, Arafat raised the issue that in fact they are attacking him, that they threaten his life not less than they threaten the lives of Israelis," Mr. Rabin said.

In Cairo, PNA member Nabil Shaath said Thursday's summit was to give Mr. Rabin the support he needs to pursue peace talks after the suicide bombing shook his people.

Dr. Shaath told AFP that Israel rejected PNA demands saying Thursday's summit was not a negotiating session.

Instead the meeting "was an attempt to give Rabin a chance to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and to pursue the negotiations after the rage provoked by the Netanyahu attack," Dr. Shaath said.

"We understand the situation in which Rabin's government finds itself after the Netanyahu attack and we are aware of the obligations on us," Dr. Shaath said.

"But we cannot stop violence with security measures alone. In every country of the region it is clear that repression breeds more violence."

Features

In Shatoi village, which did a deal to keep away Russian bombers, Christopher Bellamy found scant support for the rebel leader

Mountain Chechens hostile to guerrillas

THE CAUCASUS mountains rise suddenly from the plain round Grozny like an icy fortress wall. Heading into the valley towards Shatoi is like entering a giant castle gateway, with loopholes either side ready to rain projectiles down.

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She pointed to the memorial to the dead of the Great Patriotic War, knocked over, locals said, in a Russian air raid. "I've lived here 35 years," she continued. "They were coming over day and night.

Why are they bombing me? I'm Russian, for God's sake. If the Russians continued this sort of thing against us then we will fight."

Throughout the first half of this month there were heavy bombing raids, said Vakhid Hadjimuratov, the prefect of the town. "About 30 people were killed and the same number injured," he said.

On Jan. 13, Vakhid Akayev, who used to head the Philology, Anthropology and History Institute in Grozny, went to Urus Martan, 25 km south-west of the capital, a stronghold of the opposition to Mr. Dudayev, in an attempt to persuade the Russians to stop the bombing. He ran into Sergei Stepashin, the head of the Russian Federation Security Ministry — heir to the KGB.

Through the opposition, the village elders negotiated a deal whereby the Russians would stop bombing — if Shatoi elected a "temporary Soviet" and banned Chechen guerrillas from entering the town. The bombing stopped on Jan. 15.

"I don't think there will be a guerrilla war in the mountains. They won't let them in," said Ahmed, Vakhid's younger brother, who used to head the town's community centre until Mr. Dudayev closed it. "It was because he doesn't believe in culture," he said. "You can't hold in



A fighter in Samaski, Chechnya, stands beside a Russian armoured vehicle in which seven men were killed

the mountains if the villagers won't let you in.

"The only place you might have a guerrilla war is the Vedeno pass — the next pass to the east and

the old hide-out of the master of guerrilla warfare, Shamil.

But much has changed since Shamil fought the Russians for a quarter of a

century from the 1830s to the end of the 1850s. Shamil's forces could make their own weapons: the Chechens would need highly sophisticated weapons brought in from outside.

especially anti-aircraft missiles. "If we had anti-aircraft missiles there wouldn't be a single Russian soldier in Chechnya," said Ahmad.

Shamil was not con-

strained by national boundaries: the Chechens have a very small area of the mountains. If they move into neighbouring Ingush-

tia or Dagestan the Russians will bomb there, too — and the locals are likely to take the same view as the villagers — *The Independent*.

Arafat to focus on settlements

(Continued from page 1)

Shami remained behind bars in Gaza City central prison. Mr. Forah said police detained more members of the group while he was in jail, but he could not tell who they were. Other Islamic Jihad sources said the new detainees were not influential members.

"It's useless to arrest people like us," Mr. Forah, a mosque preacher, told AFP.

"We are not connected to the armed militants, they are clandestine and unknown or else their operations would not be successful."

Meanwhile, police arrested about ten members and supporters of Hamas, said Enad Fahji, a leader of the group.

He said the arrests were made in the past week, and did not include important figures.

Mr. Rabin said Friday Mr. Arafat fears his life is being threatened by Syrian-based Palestinian groups opposed to his peace deal with Israel.

Mr. Rabin told Israel Television that Mr. Arafat had expressed his concern at the Cairo summit.

Mr. Rabin said Mr. Arafat joined his demand that Damascus stop providing a haven for an alliance of 10 Palestinian groups set on wrecking the 1993 Israel-PLO peace accord.

"In the four-way talks I had a partner, Arafat, to demand that the Syrians stop... Palestinian terror organisations... (including) Islamic Jihad, which have arisen in Syria."

"As strange as it seems, Arafat raised the issue that in fact they are attacking him, that they threaten his life not less than they threaten the lives of Israelis," Mr. Rabin said.

In Cairo, PNA member Nabil Shaath said Thursday's summit was to give Mr. Rabin the support he needs to pursue peace talks after the suicide bombing shook his people.

Dr. Shaath told AFP that Israel rejected PNA demands saying Thursday's summit was not a negotiating session.

Instead the meeting "was an attempt to give Rabin a chance to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and give him the support he needs to pursue the negotiations after the rage provoked by the Netanyahu attack," Dr. Shaath said.

"We understand the situation in which Rabin's government finds itself after the Netanyahu attack and we are aware of the obligations on us," Dr. Shaath said.

But "we cannot stop violence with security measures alone. In every country of the region it is clear that repression breeds more violence."

he warned.

"An end to Jewish settlement building, the release of Palestinian prisoners, and the lifting of the closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip are measures just as likely to eradicate violence," he said.

Dr. Shaath said the summit "was the fruit of a compromise since it reaffirmed Israel's commitment to apply, in letter and in spirit, the declaration of principles" signed between Israel and the PLO in September 1993.

U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali said on Friday Middle East peace accords had not yet produced tangible benefits in the lives of Palestinians and called on donor countries to provide aid they had pledged but not yet delivered.

"It is disturbing that, after nearly 17 months, these agreements have yet to produce tangible benefits in the daily lives of Palestinians," he said.

Addressing the first meeting of 1995 of the U.N. Palestine Rights Committee, he said there had been deep frustration at the continuing lack of improvement in living conditions in the occupied territories, particularly Gaza, where he said unemployment was estimated at over 50 per cent.

"The expectations created by the hundreds of millions of dollars pledged by donors have not been met. I take this opportunity to appeal once again for the prompt and effective delivery of the assistance already pledged, but not yet delivered," he said.

Dr. Ghali also referred to "acts of violence carried out by those opposed to peace," adding: "There is no justification for such deplorable incidents."

They cast a pall over the entire process, but the only way to overcome the doubts and apprehensions they generated was to renew the commitment to finding workable arrangements enabling the two sides to live peacefully together.

He also spoke of "the deep concern generated by the government of Israel's decision to expand settlements in the occupied territories," saying the negotiations which lay ahead and the difficult choices they would bring required patience, perseverance and a spirit of compromise and must be carried out in good faith.

An advisor to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said the unprecedented summit in Cairo on Thursday will not usher in a new Middle East alliance excluding other Arab parties.

"We are against any axis

King meets Ben Alawi

(Continued from page 1)

parts from Egypt, Syria and five other Gulf Arab states in an attempt to revive the so-called Damascus Declaration.

They will try to finalise accords on joint security and economic cooperation, an Egyptian official said.

Egypt, Syria and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates — signed the Damascus declaration following the 1991 Gulf war.

The declaration, which envisages wide-ranging cooperation and joint security arrangements in the Gulf, has so far remained a dead letter because of the reluctance of GCC countries to see Egypt

King meets Ben Alawi

and Syria play a leading role in Gulf security.

Sunday's meeting will aim to find a compromise between two draft accords proposed by Egypt and the GCC.

Egypt's proposals focus on economic cooperation and the creation of an Arab economic community, while Gulf states put the emphasis on security arrangements, the Egyptian official said.

The GCC wants the right to call in foreign, non-Arab troops if any of Arab League members are attacked, he said.

Ministers will also discuss last Thursday's landmark Arab-Israeli summit in Cairo, a border dispute between Yemen and Saudi Arabia and ways of improving inter-Arab relations, Egyptian diplomats said.

Saudis said to give \$30m to PNA

(Continued from page 1)

Jerusalem Fund, which he heads.

The sources noted that Hussein wanted to circumvent the PA and receive the money directly, out of concern it would never reach Jerusalem if it went through Gaza.

Hussein convinced the Saudis the money would all

be strictly accounted for and used for a list of development projects, which he presented them during his visit.

Saudi Prime Minister Saud Faisal and Riyadh Governor Salman Ben Abdul Aziz were reportedly the key Saudi figures who negotiated with Hussein.

Hussein and his spokesman were unavailable for comment yesterday.

Algeria recalls Paris envoy

(Continued from page 1)

we encourage any initiative that... favours a peaceful solution among Algerians," Mr. Kebir told the French daily Liberation.

Algeria's President Liamine Zeroul, who last year tried in vain to negotiate with detained FIS leaders, has shown no sign of bending to the Rome plan. Instead, he has promised that presidential elections will be held this year.

While the United States and France have swung behind the Rome plan, diplomats in Algiers question how much influence the FIS now has on armed groups, even if negotiations were held.

Western intelligence sources say 30,000 people have died in the three-year conflict sparked by cancellation of an election the FIS was poised to win.

But the armed branch of the FIS, the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), has now been overshadowed by the ruthless Armed Islamic Group (GIA) which last December hijacked an Air France jet.

Algerian newspapers said

on Saturday the GIA had now claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb last Monday in central Algiers that killed 42 people and wounded nearly 300.

The pro-communist Le Matin said the GIA claim was made in "bulletins pasted on walls" in Kouba, an Islamist stronghold on the heights of the capital.

La Tribune, viewed as one of the newspapers closest to the Islamists, said: "The GIA has of course taken responsibility for the attack. The blast was the deed of the GIA which has also called for increased terrorist actions during Ramadan."

Neither newspaper, under Algeria's tough decrees on "apology for terrorism," could carry the text of the GIA statement.

But La Tribune said the GIA had replaced its chief, Mahfoud Tajine, with a new, fiercely hardline militant, Djamel Zitouni. He is suspected of killing five French nationals last August in an attack on that country's diplomatic compound in Algiers.

Syria upholds right to resist

(Continued from page 1)

shall surely appreciate the leading role by Egypt. We see the Egyptians as the leader of the peace process in the Middle East."

Mr. Rabin told Israel Television on Friday that Mr. Arafat expressed fears during the Cairo summit meeting that his life was being threatened by the Syrian-based groups.

Tishreen said support to Palestinian and Lebanese resistance movements would continue.

"Because Syria supports the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples' struggle and because it calls for a just and comprehensive peace which would end occupation, it is hosting terrorists in Israel's view," Tishreen said.

The paper said military attacks which Israel portrayed as "terrorist" actions were acts of resistance.

"If we review Israel's practices since it was established we will see a big record of terrorist actions."

A 'Lofty View' U.S. military in Croatia and beyond

By Maud S. Beelman
The Associated Press

BRAC ISLAND, Croatia — Shrouded in secrecy, a U.S. military team has set up operations on this rocky outcropping in the Adriatic Sea to spy on neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Americans, who are apparently launching reconnaissance aircraft, are part of the growing U.S. involvement in the Balkans. While still refraining from open armed support of the Bosnian government, the United States is increasingly playing a military role at the edges of Europe's worst bloodshed since World War II.

The approximately 20 Americans, all in civilian clothes, have virtually taken over a large tourist hotel in the village of Bol, this idyllic island's top resort. Accompanied by plainclothes Croatian guardsmen, they mainly keep to themselves, departing each morning by bus to an undisclosed location.

The Croatian government has not publicly acknowledged their presence, though the hotel would normally close in winter and the nearby small airport is blockaded by Croatian military police. Armed guards turn back the curious.

But the European headquarters of the U.S. military, upon questioning, confirmed that U.S. soldiers and Defence Department contractors are on Brac on a mission named "Lofty View."

It's "an operation to map and survey primary and secondary lines of communication in Bosnia-Herzegovina," Cmdr. Ron Morse, a spokesman in Stuttgart, Germany, told the Associated Press by telephone.

He claimed the operation was in support of the U.S.-led "Provide Promise" effort, which includes the Sarajevo airlift and aid drops over Bosnia, suspended last May. Cmdr. Morse would not say how the surveillance might be used.

Local residents, who re-

fuse to give their names for fear of government reprisal, say the Americans arrived in December and work from the airport, perched on the island's point. Loaded and empty dump trucks can be seen on and near the airport road.

"The Americans are at the airport and they have planes there," said a local Croatian journalist. He insisted on anonymity, saying Croatia's Defence Ministry had warned against mentioning the U.S. military presence.

But on Jan. 2, The Independent, mostly satirical weekly feral tribute reported on its search for "the American soldiers" on Brac (pronounced Bratch).

A week later, the U.S. trade journal Aviation Week and Space Technology reported the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was launching manned and unmanned reconnaissance aircraft from Brac.

It cited similar operations elsewhere in Croatia, and last year in Albania, U.S. and Albanian sources told the AP last May the CIA had used Gjadar air base to fly unmanned spy mission over Serbia and Bosnia.

Cmdr. Morse refused to say whether Brac was a CIA operation.

Pentagon involvement in the Balkans has increased significantly in the past year and that has prompted suspicion.

Britain media alleged in November that the United States was providing intelligence to Bosnian forces. The Pentagon refused to comment at the time.

A U.S. law that took effect last November stopped U.S. monitoring of the arms embargo on Bosnia, and sharing of intelligence on violations. It also mandated planning for how the United States and "military forces of friendly states" would train Bosnian government troops.

The United States and Croatia signed a military accord on Nov. 29, just days before islanders first noted Americans on Brac.

In January, U.S. Undersecretary of Defence for Policy Walter Slocombe

and Rear Adm. David Morris, deputy commander of naval forces in Europe, paid separate visits to Croatia. Cmdr. Morse toured shipyards contracted to repair U.S. ships.

A private U.S. consultant, Military Professional Resources Inc., has contracted to help train Croatia's army, State Department Spokeswoman Christine Shelly said in October. "No active-duty U.S. military officer is participating in this venture," she said.

Although there are no U.S. ground forces in Bosnia, retired U.S. Gen. Frederick Franks is the military adviser to the Bosnian Muslim-Croat Federation created under U.S. auspices.

About 500 U.S. soldiers serve as U.N. peacekeepers in Macedonia. U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry announced last summer plans for closer military cooperation and plans to educate Macedonia military officers in the United States and Europe.

Mr. Perry visited Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria and Romania last summer, promising closer military cooperation and supplies to each.

Western diplomats say they are not worried about what one called the United States' "extensive" presence in the area.

"We see it as encouraging and helping Croatia to towards Western ideals of democracy and avoiding conflict," said one.

Although Croatia has said nothing about the Americans on Brac, a weekly newspaper closely tied to the government attempted last week to calm islanders' fears that they will lose tourism just rebounding after Croatia's 1991 war.

Writing in Nedjeljna Dalmacija, military columnist Emil Vidusic said there was no need to worry that "the tourism jewel of central Dalmatia will become foreign military bases guarded by wire... (or) a camp for training special police under the guidance of foreign instructors."

Arab coffers reel under heavy defence spending

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Defence spending is still sapping the budgets of most Arab states at the expense of development despite lower oil income and the peace process with Israel, according to an official report Friday.

Spending on arms purchases, security and salaries for the army and police consumed more than half the total expenditure of some members of the Arab League, while Saudi Arabia and its Gulf neighbours appeared to be the biggest defence spenders in terms of the size of funds.

Although oil earnings fell in 1993 and a breakthrough was achieved in the Middle East peace process, defence expenditure by the League's 22 members increased to 27.5

per cent of their total spending in 1993 from 25.66 per cent in 1992 and 24.72 per cent in 1991, said the League's annual report for 1993.

Meanwhile expenditure on public services stood at 23.73 per cent of total spending in 1993, social services received 24.81 per cent and economic development around 12.15 per cent.

The report — prepared by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund, the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development — gave no figures for 1994 as some members are apparently still spending on contracts finalised during the previous year.

A breakdown showed Sudan spent the most on defence compared to total expenditure, standing at 54.5 per cent in 1993.

It was followed by Oman, at 45.71 per cent, Yemen at 44.55 per cent, Qatar 36 per cent, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) 35.89 per cent and Bahrain 34.53 per cent.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil producer and exporter, spent 31.47 per cent on defence in 1993 compared with 29.83 per cent in 1992, the report said.

Kuwait, which is rebuilding its army following the 1990 Iraqi invasion, allocated 29.28 per cent to defence in 1993 compared with 14.53 per cent in 1992 and only 5.4 per cent in 1991.

At the same time Kuwait's public services received 7.49 per cent while 18.97 per cent went to social services and 44.26 per cent to development.

Services and development, however, were not largely affected some member countries. In Egypt, defence expenditure stood at 19.58 per cent while public services received 52.24 per cent and social services around 21.46 per cent.

The report gave no figures for embargo-hit Iraq, which was one of the world's biggest arms spenders before it was defeated in the 1991 Gulf war.

No recent figures were available for Syria, another key arms buyer which has yet

to make peace with Israel. Its defence allocations totalled 29.03 per cent in 1990 and a similar proportion in 1989.

Algeria, hit by Muslim fundamentalist violence, emerged as the smallest defence spender in the region, with allocations of only 8.23 per cent in 1993 compared to 16.32 per cent for public services, 41 per cent for social services and 2.16 per cent for economic development.

High defence expenditure coupled with low oil revenues and a large bill for the liberation of Kuwait has hit hard the economies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and their four partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

But economic problems have not dissuaded them

from pressing ahead with plans to bolster their armies to deter a possible fresh Iraqi attack. Such plans have also been prompted by their suspicion of armament programmes in neighbouring Iran.

Such developments pushed the combined GCC budget deficit to a record \$65 billion in 1991 but it eased to around \$29 billion in 1993.

The report gave no figures for the size of defence allocations by Arab countries, but their general expenditure totalled around \$162.9 billion in 1993.

Total spending by the GCC, which also groups Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE, stood at nearly \$86.6 billion.

Drive to market reform endangers democracy — report

STRASBOURG (AFP) — The drive to market reforms in eastern Europe must be restrained if the massive growth in poverty is not to pose a serious threat to democracy in the region, the Council of Europe parliamentary assembly warned in a report published Friday.

"It is an illusion to hope that economic growth alone can overcome poverty," the report warned, noting that the number of poor people in central and eastern Europe had risen from eight million to 58 million between 1989, the year that saw the passing of communism in most of the region, and 1993.

protective measures for the most vulnerable members of the population: "The unemployed, retired people, and the sick."

The report, presented to the assembly by Austrian socialist deputy Alfred Gusenbauer, said "some companies, even if running at a loss, should continue to receive aid so as not to increase unemployment."

To fight poverty caused by the market economy, income should be redistributed by means of social insurance and assistance policies, the Council of Europe deputies said.

In the field of health, the benefits offered by the communist system "should be maintained by guaranteeing universal access to medical services".

The report noted with concern a fall in life expectancy over the last five years in much of the region, especially in Hungary.

Though several former communist countries have achieved or are about to achieve associate member status with the European Union, living standards remain low throughout eastern Europe.

Of the problems caused by widespread impoverishment it said: "Democracy is threatened because it is tempting to link their appearance to the establishment of democracy."

Deputies of the 33-member Council of Europe, currently meeting here for their winter session, urged leaders of central and eastern Europe to "restore the balance of marked forces between the state and the private sector, and not totally liberate market forces without securing

Israel no longer eligible for U.S. trade preferences

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Israel will no longer qualify for low duties on its exports to the United States under special trade benefits intended for developing countries, the White House said Friday. An order by President Bill Clinton said Israeli per capita gross national pro-

duct now exceeds the limit set under U.S. law for the so-called generalised system of preferences (GSP). The Bahamas was also removed from the list under the GSP, which provides lower tariffs for goods imported from eligible countries.

Clinton challenges Congress to hike minimum wage

WASHINGTON (R) — Saying that 1994 was the best year for U.S. economic growth in a decade, President Bill Clinton challenged Congress Saturday to extend the prosperity to the lowest-paid American workers by increasing the minimum wage.

"Nobody can live on \$4.25 an hour, and yet 5.5 million Americans are working for just that amount, and many of them have children to feed," said Mr. Clinton, who proposed Friday that the minimum wage be raised 90 cents over two years.

His proposal is encountering resistance in the new Republican-led Congress, where there is a widespread conviction that it would raise business costs and kill jobs.

Drawing a parallel between himself and former President George Bush, Mr. Clinton noted in his weekly radio speech that in 1990, Congress raised the minimum wage by the same amount he

proposes.

"If in 1990, a Republican president and a Democratic Congress could get the job done, surely in 1995 a Republican Congress and a Democratic president can do the same to uphold the value of hard work for the American people," he said.

Mr. Clinton's five-minute radio speech was taped in advance.

About 10 million people, roughly 10 per cent of the labour force, would be directly or indirectly affected by a minimum wage hike.

At a White House news briefing Friday, presidential Press Secretary Mike McCurry denied that "contrast politics" played a part in Mr. Clinton's proposal, saying it was not designed to highlight a difference between Mr. Clinton and the Republicans on a working class issue.

"There will be ways in which the president and the Democrats in Congress will

be able to contrast their vision of the American future with the vision of the Republican leadership, and Republicans in Congress," he said.

But Mr. McCurry added that Mr. Clinton would like to see both parties get credit for something "that will ultimately reward those who are trying to work and who ought not to be in poverty because they are working."

Mr. Clinton prefaced his challenge to Congress with a glowing report on the state of the economy.

"1994 was the best year for economic growth in 10 years in the United States. And the combined rates of unemployment and inflation are the lowest they've been in 25 years," he said.

Mr. Clinton said that while he was proud of this record, the national leadership could not rest on its laurels because "too many Americans are working harder and not getting ahead."

Morocco invests \$175m to combat drought effect

RABAT (R) — Morocco decided to invest 1.5 billion dirhams (\$175 million) to combat the effects of drought on the nation's agriculture and provide farmers with emergency help, the Moroccan news agency MAP said Friday.

The authoritative think-tank Centre Marocain de Conjoncture (CMC) said the current drought was expected to shrink Morocco's economy in 1995, reversing last year's record 11 per cent growth.

"Compared with the exceptional performance of 1994, growth this year will be negative due to the serious effect on agricultural production," the CMC said.

Experts said the country had received only one-third its normal rainfall so far this year. Only 60 per cent of the acreage reserved for cereals had been planted.

Morocco had plentiful rains and an excellent harvest of 9.4 million tonnes of cereals last year.

An urgent programme

against the drought effect "which will cost 1.5 billion dirhams" was decided during a ministerial meeting chaired by Prime Minister Abdul Latif Filali on Friday, the agency said.

"More than 100,000 tonnes of subsidised feed will be distributed to breeders from next week," MAP said.

It said that 70,000 tonnes of imported barley for livestock consumption was expected to be delivered by Feb. 22 to the ports of Casablanca, Agadir, Tangier and Nador.

"Half a million hectares of barley in the fertile southern provinces of Marrakesh, Tensift and Safi are under serious threat if not already lost," the agriculture ministry said.

Morocco is expected to import a growing proportion of its wheat needs this year because of the drought.

The country announced the import of 100,000 tonnes of soft wheat and 40,000 tonnes of barley on Friday.

Greeks prefer security of public sector

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Thousands of job seekers converged on government offices Friday to apply for 3,000 life-term civil service positions determined by competitive examinations.

Applicants will be chosen for the posts after exams in April. Another 3,000 applicants will be selected based on their education and previous work experience.

The government said about 170,000 people are expected to apply to take the examination.

"Social phenomenon, which should create concern," the conservative Athens daily Kathimerini said Friday commenting on the high number of applicants.

The paper added: "The huge interest is indicative of the uncertainty and insecurity among youth who seek even in the era of private enterprise, the security of the public sector."

Government officials reported that about 150,000 people from the Athens area are expected to take the exam and 20,000 from Salonica, the country's second biggest city in the north.

Over 30 per cent of the nation's 3.5 million work force are directly or indirectly connected to the public sector.

The bloated public sector often used for political patronage, has been consistently blamed for the country's perennial annual deficits.

Successive governments have been reluctant to shrink the public sector despite repeated pre-election campaign pledges.

Trade war flares up between U.S. and China

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States Saturday announced sanctions that will double the price of \$1.08 billion worth of Chinese imports, setting off a trade war between two of the world's biggest trading partners.

China responded almost immediately by raising tariffs 100 per cent on some U.S. imports and taking other retaliatory measures against U.S. companies.

The Chinese move came less than an hour after the United States imposed 100 per cent tariffs on 35 categories of Chinese imports covering everything from fishing rods to cellular telephones.

U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor said the action represented the largest trade retaliation ever taken by the U.S. government.

"We cannot stand by while the interests of our fastest-

growing, most competitive industries are sacrificed in China," Mr. Kantor said.

He said the step was necessary because the administration failed to resolve a dispute with China over the pirating of American computer programmes, movies and music.

The U.S. tariffs go into effect the 12:01 a.m. on Feb. 26.

The tariffs effectively would cause companies to stop shipping some Chinese products into the United States, which accounts for 40 per cent of China's overseas sales.

In Beijing, the official Xinhua news agency paraphrased an unidentified senior trade official as saying that under the country's foreign trade law, "China will have to take counter-retaliatory measures ... to

safeguard China's sovereignty and national dignity."

The Chinese official said Beijing plans to raise to 100 per cent tariffs on U.S. electronic game players and their software, cassette tapes, compact discs, cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, cosmetics, rolls of film and computer-programmed switchboards.

China also will suspend negotiations with U.S. auto companies seeking to set up joint ventures, suspend approval for U.S. companies and their subsidiaries to set up holding companies, and withhold permission for U.S. audio-visual manufacturers to set up branches or representative offices.

The measures also include breaking off ties with U.S. industry associations such as the Business Software Alliance that have actively

supported Washington's efforts to strengthen China's enforcement of laws and regulations protecting patents, copyrights and trademarks.

The Xinhua report did not say when the Chinese retaliatory sanctions will take effect.

U.S. negotiators left Beijing a week ago after talks broke down and Chinese officials failed to respond to Mr. Kantor's request that one last effort be made to resolve the issue before Saturday's deadline.

The stiff tariffs represent the amount of harm the United States claims American businesses suffer because of China's failure to crack down on the theft of U.S. copyrights and patents.

The \$1.08 billion list was drawn from an initial list of \$2.8 billion in Chinese goods that was published a month

ago. Among the hardest hit products are plastics, including picture frames, cellular phones, answering machines, sporting goods and some bicycles.

The plastics category accounts for \$465 million; answering machines and cellular phones, \$108 million; sporting goods, \$78 million, and bicycles, \$65 million.

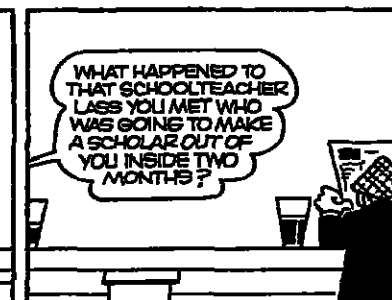
Mr. Kantor said the items were selected because they are the fastest-growing Chinese exports to the United States, are mostly made in state-owned factories, and are not components used in the production of U.S. goods — so American businesses would not be hurt.

He added that U.S. consumers would not be hurt because they can easily buy these goods from other sources.

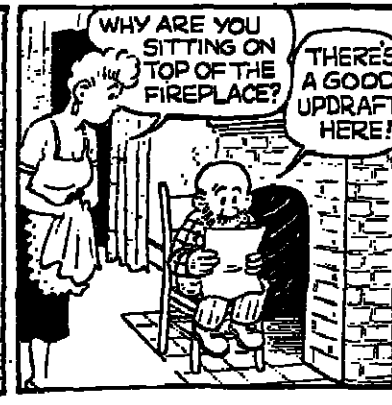
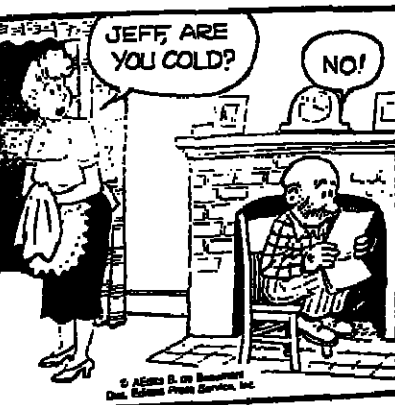
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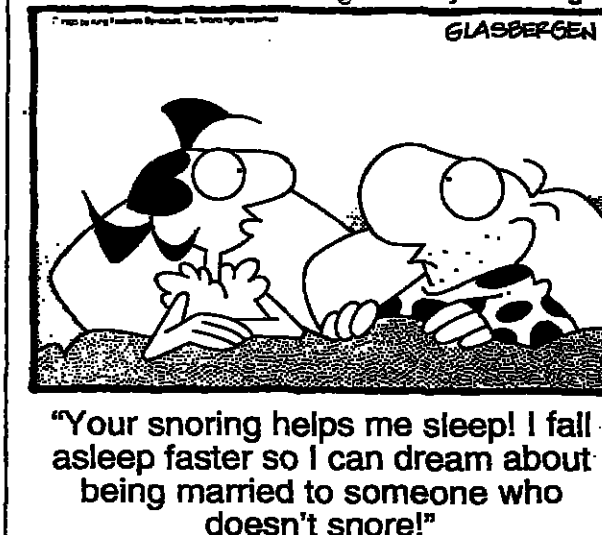
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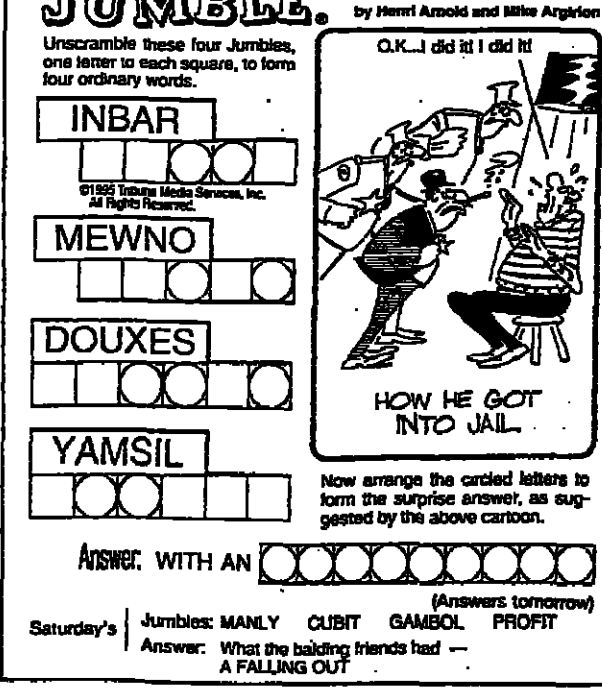
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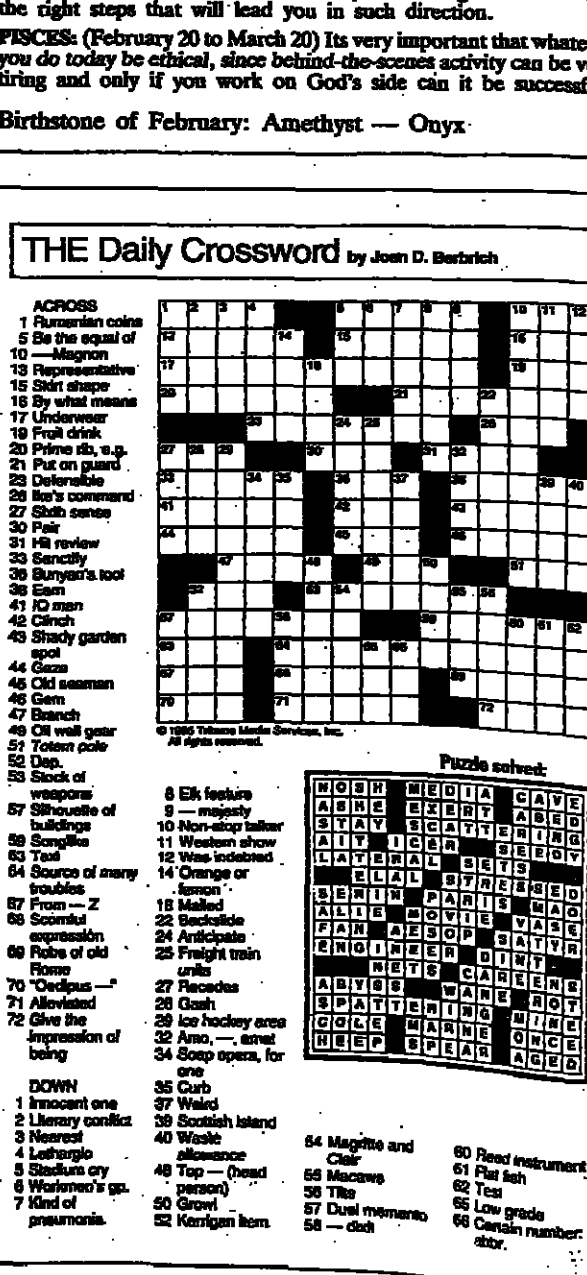
THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



THE Daily Crossword





Sweden's Stefan Edberg

Davis Cup holders head for early exit

PARIS (AFP) — Sweden, the Davis Cup holders, were heading for a shock exit from the first round of the 1995 campaign, after trailing Denmark 2-0 on Friday's opening day.

Jonas Bjorkman, a late replacement for Magnus Larsson, was beaten by Kenneth Carlsen, and mighty Stefan Edberg was toppled by rank outsider Frederik Fetterlein.

In other World Group ties, Russia, last year's losing finalists, took a 2-0 lead over Belgium, Michael Stich and Boris Becker put Germany 2-0 up against Croatia, Austria were all square with Spain and the United States were tied with France.

South Africa's clash with Australia was postponed for a day because of overnight rain — raising fears that South Africa's first World Group encounter in 16 years may be lost by forfeit.

But the shock of the day came from Copenhagen, the drama starting mid-morning with the withdrawal of Larsson complaining of stomach pains.

Bjorkman, lacking confidence on his debut, was out-gunned by Carlsen's superior service as the Dane came from a set down to win 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Carlsen is nicknamed "The Swede Killer" by the Danish press, following his victories over Edberg at Wimbledon and Larsson at Copenhagen last year.

Buoyed up by his teammate's victory, and the roars of support from the crowd from the second set onwards, Fetterlein came back from a 6-1 first set thrashing to beat Edberg 1-6, 7-5, 6-4, 6-3.

While Sweden were in trouble, their Russian rivals were brushing Belgium aside.

Andrei Chesnokov set the pace with a straight set victory over Filip Dewulf, but rising star Yevgeny Kafelnikov, the world number 10,

had to come from a set down to beat Kris Goossens, ranked 160, in three hours.

Chesnokov, who celebrated his 29th birthday on Thursday, outplayed Dewulf in the opening set, but the two men twice swapped service breaks in the second set before Chesnokov made the decisive break in the ninth game.

Dewulf missed his chance to get back into the match in the final set after taking a 5-4 lead and earning two set points in the 10th game, before Chesnokov's excellent returns on the clay court averted the danger.

Kafelnikov, a quarter-finalist in the recent Australian Open, was tested throughout his match by Goossens, a losing finalist in the Belgian national championships.

In St. Petersburg, Florida, Codric Pionne got France off on the right foot with a 7-5, 6-2, 6-4 victory over Todd Martin, but former world number one Jim Courier recouped a point for the hosts with a 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Guy Forget.

Despite the absence of Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi, the United States were heavy favourites to beat the French, and Pionne's victory was a real morale-booster.

After dropping his serve in the 11th game of the first set, Martin floundered. But he fought back to 4-5 in the third and had Pionne two break points down before the Frenchman served out the match.

"I was a little bit worried at the end," French captain Yannick Noah admitted. "It's hard to finish and Cedric was really tense. It was his first big game in Davis Cup, and I was really happy with how he came back after 15-40."

Courier brought the French down to earth with a bump. His victory took just

an hour and a half and ran Forget ragged. Forget was slated to play doubles on Saturday against the U.S. duo of Jared Palmer and Richey Reneberg — the Australian Open doubles champions.

In Karlsruhe, Stich overpowered Goran Ivanisevic 7-6 (7/3), 4-6, 6-1, 6-4, while Becker, back in Davis Cup action after two years away, had a much easier game against Sasa Hirszon, the world number 329.

Stich said the turning point in his match came in the opening set.

"If Goran had won the tie-break, it would probably have been very, very close," he admitted.

Ivanisevic, whose team are making their debut in the World Group, appeared to run out of steam as the match wore on.

Stich said: "When you are playing for the first time in the World Group, the pressure is greater than in a normal tournament."

Towards the end, his service became weaker and weaker, and his service is a major part of his game."

Austria and Spain were locked in a 1-1 draw after the expected victories for Thomas Muster and Sergi Bruguera.

Bruguera, the reigning French Open champion, put the Spanish in front by crushing Gilbert Schaller, only for Muster to similarly dispatch Carlos Costa in straight sets.

Bruguera, serving magnificently and dictating the pace throughout his match, needed only 100 minutes to finish the job.

The sheer variety of the Spaniard's game highlighted the difference between a player in the top 10 and one languishing around the 50s.

Doubles partner Emilio Sanchez commented: "Bruguera is in different class."

Muster squared the tie af-

ter two hours with Costa, breaking his opponent in the ninth game of the first two sets for 5-4, and then again for 2-1 in the third before serving out for the match.

In Durban, South Africa's match was hit by rain at the Westridge Park venue.

"The court is completely unplayable," said South African Marcus Ondruska, who was due to play the first singles match against Patrick Rafter.

The newly-laid hardcourt started breaking up after the heavy rain infiltrated the covers and soaked into the surface.

International Tennis Federation president Brian Tabin said: "It is not beyond the realms of reality that South Africa may have to forfeit, but obviously we will give the court every chance to dry out."

Match referee Javier San-Sierra said a decision will be made whether to proceed with the clash after the players have warmed up on Saturday.

Switzerland's Marc Rosset retired hurt during his match against Dutchman Jacco Eltingh in Geneva and will be out of action for about three months.

Rosset, the Barcelona Olympic champion, has broken a bone in his right foot.

He was leading one set to love and was 2-3 down in the second when he retired, handing Eltingh the match.

Rosset will be replaced by Lorenzo Mantia, ranked 256th in the world, in Saturday's doubles, alongside Jakob Hlasek. His replacement for Sunday's reverse singles rubber has yet to be named.

The tie stands at 1-1 as Hlasek later beat the Netherlands' Richard Krajicek.

In the other European tie, Italy are drawing 1-1 with the Czech Republic.

Young, Aikman join forces in All-Star game

HONOLULU (AP) — Now the 49ers and Cowboys get to gang up on the AFC.

Generally conceded to be the National Football League's two best teams, San Francisco and Dallas also dominate the NFC roster for Sunday's Pro Bowl.

That presents scenarios such as the 49ers' Steve Young heading off to the NFC bench and the AFC defense sighing a sigh of relief, only to see the Cowboy's Troy Aikman trot on to replace him.

"It's a great team," said coach Barry Switzer, who along with his Dallas assistants comprise the NFC staff, "but of course the AFC also has a great team."

Dallas will have the most players in the game, 10. Eleven Cowboys were voted onto the All-Star squad, but running back Emmitt Smith isn't playing because of an injury.

The 49ers had nine players selected in the three-way balloting by fans and the league's coaches and players. Young, however, lost his favorite target and the NFC lost its top wide receiver when Jerry Rice, who would have been making his ninth consecutive Pro Bowl appearance, had to pull out because of a slight separation in his left shoulder.

Other 49ers in the starting lineup for the 25th renewal of the Pro Bowl are tight end Brent Jones, cornerback Deion Sanders and free safety Merton Hanks.

Dallas' starters on offense are fullback Daryl Johnston, tight end Jay Novacek, center John Stepanski and guard Nate Newton. Cowboys slated to open on defense are end Charles Haley, tackle Leon Left and safety Darren Woodson. Wide receiver Michael Irvin, voted into the game as a reserve, also will start because of injuries to Rice and Sterling Sharpe of Green Bay.

The Dallas-San Francisco combine gives Mark Tuinei, an 11-year NFL veteran tackle with the cowboys who'll be appearing in his first Pro Bowl, an opportunity to line up alongside an old teammate at the University of Hawaii, 49ers' guard Jesse Sapolu, who is in the All-Star game for the second consecutive year.

Despite the presence of the high-powered stars from the 49ers and Cowboys on the NFC side, the AFC, which hasn't won a Super Bowl since the Los Angeles Raiders did it in 1984, actually has matched up fairly well with the NFC in the Pro Bowl over that same span.

The AFC has won five of the last 11 games, although the NFC won 17-3 a year ago and leads the series 14-10.

Bill Cowher, like Switzer, is making his Pro Bowl debut, and his Pittsburgh staff are the AFC coaches.

The AFC quarterback corps will counter the NFC trio of Young, Aikman and Warren Moon of Minnesota with an impressive threesome of its own — Denver's John Elway, New England's Drew Bledsoe and the Los Angeles Raiders' Jeff Hostetler. Miami's Dan Marino was voted in as the starter, but Marino is ailing and can't play and Hostetler replaced him on the roster.

The Pittsburgh Steelers, who lost to San Diego in the AFC title game, had six players voted into the Pro Bowl, most for the conference.

Date, Davenport in Tokyo finals

TOKYO (AP) — Hard-hitting American Lindsay Davenport will meet Japan's No. 1 female player, Kimiko Date, in the singles final of the Toray Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament.

Fifth-seeded Date became the first Japanese player to reach the final of the tournament after trouncing eighth-seeded Iva Majoli of Croatia, 6-1, 6-4 Saturday.

Third-seeded Davenport overcame seventh-seeded Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria 6-3, 6-2, on the carpet court at Tokyo Metropolitan Gym.

"I thought I played pretty well today. I was able to take the ball early, attack and hit the ball clean. I thought I was able to dictate the pace of the match and move her around a lot more than she could do with me," said Davenport, the world No. 6.

Date, No. 10 in the world, said: "I was able to concentrate very well. That's the most important thing for me. I started with my pace and kept it throughout."

Despite a doublefault, her second of the match, Majoli was able to keep the fourth game of the first set.

In the second set, Date, firing well-controlled passing shots, led 4-1 but Majoli fought back, winning the next three games to tie 4-4, but Date recovered to win the match in 1 hour, 3 minutes.

Date took the fifth game of the first set and the second game of the second set at love.

"She (Date) played really well. I could not concentrate," said Majoli, whose well-placed passing shots of the earlier rounds disappeared Saturday.

Davenport, 18, and 19-year-old Maleeva were tied at 3-3 in the first set before Davenport won the next three games, the seventh game at love.

Davenport dominated the second set, firing well-placed passing and cross-court shots, breaking in the fourth and eighth games.

Maleeva hailed Davenport, saying: "She serviced pretty well and returned well in both the first and second sets. She did not miss. She played a steady match and everything was well."

"I think it will be a very tough match against Kimiko in the final. Obviously she's in her home country, and the fans will be heavily favoring her to win, but that is pressure on her as well. The winner will be the player that



Lindsay Davenport

handles the situation best," Davenport added.

Mary Pierce of France, who won the Australian Open last week, and Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez of Spain made quick exits from the quarterfinals Friday.

The singles champion takes home \$148,500 and the runner-up \$66,500 from the total purse of \$806,250.

Bradtko advances to final

In Auckland, New Zealand, Australian Nicole Bradtko scored a pair of victories over seeded players Saturday to move into the final of the \$107,500 Amway Classic women's tennis tournament.

Bradtko, who needed a wild card into the tournament, first ousted top-seeded Julie Halard of France 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 in a quarterfinal that began Friday night but was suspended in the first set because of rain.

After a two-hour break, Bradtko came back on court to outlast Italian No. 6 seed Silvia Farina 7-5, 2-6, 6-3, in a two-hour baseline struggle.

Bradtko, 25, who as Nicole Provis was a French Open semifinalist, will now meet defending champion Ginger Helgeson Nielsen of the United States in Sunday's final.

The No. 2 seed dethroned Ukraine's seventh-seeded Natalia Medvedeva 6-4 6-4 in

the other semifinal.

"I've won a lot of matches by just hanging in there," Bradtko said.

"I have a reasonable serve and good ground strokes and I can volley, so on a given day, if I'm going well, I can be a danger."

Bradtko is making a return to the WTA Tour after taking time off last year following her marriage to Australian Olympic games basketball player Mark Bradtko.

Helgeson Nielsen's success in reaching her second WTA Tour final came with a touch of controversy.

The American, who is noted for her lengthy preparation between points, was given a point penalty for the first time in her career.

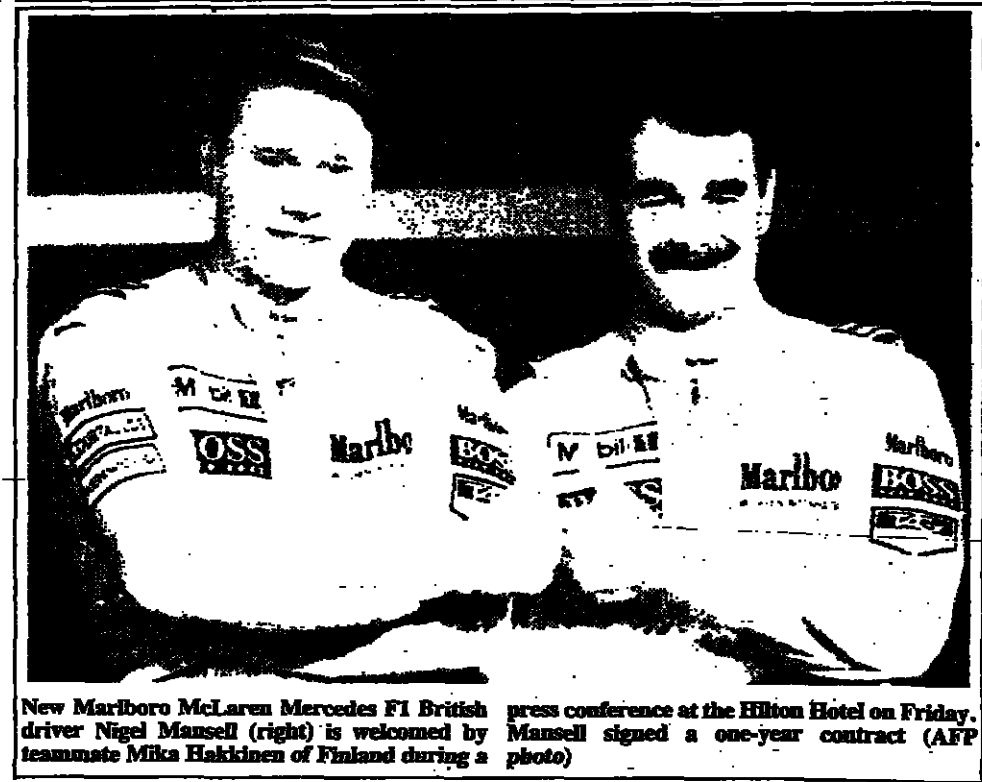
It came as the 25-year-old American was leading 4-1 in the second set, but down 0-30. She went on to drop the game.

Medvedeva rallied to 4-4 only to lose the next two games and the match.

She complained about the "ridiculous" time Helgeson Nielsen took to serve, saying: "I could have gone to drink a cup of coffee."

Helgeson Nielsen, who received a warning during her second-round win over south African Elena Reinach, said she was not trying to put her opponents off.

"It's absolutely not intentional. It's just the way I play," she said.



New Marlboro McLaren Mercedes F1 British driver Nigel Mansell (right) is welcomed by Mansell signed a one-year contract (AFP teammate Mika Hakkinen of Finland during a photo)

Tomba scores 10th World Cup win

ADELBODEN, Switzerland (R) — Unbeatable Alberto Tomba set a personal best of 10 World Cup wins in a single season on Saturday, but said that the pressure of victory was finally getting to him.

After trailing in the first leg of a giant slalom to Norway's Harald Strand Nilsen, the Italian had to dig deep into his reserves to spring a typical comeback.

Jure Kosir of Slovenia was second, just 0.07 of a second adrift of Tomba's combined time of two minutes 21.96 seconds.

Strand Nilsen, an up-and-

coming Norwegian who finished second to Tomba in the Kranjska Gora giant slalom a month ago, had to settle for third in 2:22.10.

The victory extended Tomba's overall World Cup lead to almost 500 points, but the Italian said bitter experience — he has been runner-up three times — has taught him it is too early to lay claim to Alpine skiing's most important honour.

"I just feel burned-out," said Tomba. "I've been on top form now for three months and although the wins boost your morale, it

still gets tiring. "I'm not sure I'll be able to keep it up. A lot is expected of me."

Tomba failed to find his rhythm in the first leg until the second half of the course and almost missed a gate at the end.

On the second run he started off smoothly to allow himself what he called an "explosive finish."

Kosir, gaining his first podium finish in a giant slalom, said he thought he had Tomba beaten until he saw the Italian storming through the final gates.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Cantona to star in razor ads

PARIS (AP) — He's been suspended for the season for kicking a fan, but Manchester United star Eric Cantona will still get a starring role this weekend, as pitchman for Bic razors. Bic's advertising agency, Euro-RSCG, said Friday that the company had decided to go ahead with the new TV ad campaign despite the French forward's striker's suspension for the rest of the English season for a karate-kick assault on a heckler Jan. 25. The contract with Cantona was signed several months ago, but the ads were not filmed until last weekend, after the kicking incident, the agency said.

Yugoslavia make winning return from exile

HONG KONG (R) — Yugoslavia returned from three years in soccer exile to win the four-nation Lunar New Year Tournament in Hong Kong on Saturday with a 1-0 win over South Korea. Yugoslavia have been barred from international competition because of United Nations sanctions, but were given special clearance to play in this exhibition event although they are still officially banned by world governing body FIFA. The Yugoslavs, who have played only a handful of friendly matches during the ban, outplayed the inexperienced South Korean Olympic side. Dragan Stojkovic, who now plays for Nagoya Grampus Eight in Japan, was their outstanding player as Darko Kovacevic scored the winner with a glancing header that went in off defender Choi Yoon-Yeol after 50 minutes.

Struggling Celtics fight among themselves

BOSTON (AFP) — Boston Celtics point guards Sherman Douglas and David Wesley had to be pulled apart at practice on Friday after trading shoves and punches. The incident was just one more problem for the struggling Celtics, who have lost seven of their last eight games. Coach Chris Ford has tried to shake up the team by removing co-captains Dominique Wilkins and Dee Brown from the starting line-up for the past two games. Friday's tussle came during an intense intra-squad practice game. When several players collided, Douglas and Wesley started swinging.

Sutter illness setback for Bayern

MUNICH (R) — Bayern Munich's Swiss international Alain Sutter has been forced to go into hospital, dealing the European Cup quarter-finalists another major blow before this month's restart of the German season. Sutter complained of feeling very weak during Bayern's training camp in Portugal this week and has returned to Germany for tests, the club said on Friday. He is likely to miss the February 18 restart of the Bundesliga after the winter break. Bayern have been hit by injuries to key players in recent weeks. Captain Lothar Matthaus is unlikely to play again this season after rupturing an Achilles tendon and French international striker Jean-Pierre Papin will also be out for the important first weeks of the second half of the season.

Cinema	Tel.: 634144	Cinema	Tel.: 699238	Cinema	Tel.: 677420	Tel.: 618274 - 618275	Tel.: 675571	Tel.: 625155
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Armand Assante & Sherilyn Fenn in FATAL INSTINCT		Julia Roberts & Nick Nolte in I Love Trouble		CONCORD "1" Sylvester Stallone - Sharon Stone in The Specialist		SUM'A in the satirical play HI CITIZEN Composed and directed by Mohammed Al Shawagfeh Daily from 8:30 p.m. Children's Play The Ninja Turtles Show Directed by Akram Abul Ragheb Daily at 10:30 p.m.	Presents Abu Awwad In the social comedy Punctured Bag The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	Presents: AL SALAM YA SALAM at 8:30 p.m. For reservation, please call 625155 The theatre is closed on Saturdays & Sundays
Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 8:30, 10:30 The movie: THE LION KING will be shown on Fridays and Thursdays at 11:00 a.m. & 12:30 p.m.		Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 8:15, 10:30 CONCORD "2" Tom Hanks ... in Sleepless in Seattle Shows: 2:30, 8:00				



European champions Susanna Rahkamo and Petri Kokko (center) of Finland pose with second placed French team Sophie Moniotte and Pascal Lavanchy (left) as well as third placed Russians Anjelika Krylova and Oleg Ovisiannikov after receiving their medals following their ice dance performance on Friday (AFP photo)

Figure Skating

Finns take first ever European gold

DORTMUND (AP) — Susanna Rahkamo and Petri Kokko gained Finland's first gold medal at the European Figure Skating Championship by capturing the ice dance event Friday.

The Finns, who train in Germany and had the crowd behind them, held on to their slim lead and took the title by a one-judge margin over Sophie Moniotte and Pascal Lavanchy of France.

Angelika Krylova and Oleg Ovisiannikov of Russia took third.

The Olympic champions, Oksana Grischuk and Yevgeny Plavov of Russia, had to miss the competition because of Plavov's knee injury. They are expected to be back for the World Championship in Birmingham, England in March.

Rahkamo the daughter of Helsinki's lord mayor, and Kokko, a student of economics, had a 5-4 majority decision from the nine-judge panel in the final free dance worth 50 per cent of the final score. The Finns were leading after the compulsory dances and original dance.

The champions skated to a Beatles medley of "Yesterday" and "Hard Day's Night" and earned scores from 5.6 to 5.9 on a scale up to 6.0.

"We appeared in a European Championship for the first time in 1986," Kokko said. "Now we are European champions. It's incredible."

The French, to a big jazzy beat, had the same range of marks but the majority of judges cards went to the Finns.

The Russians in third had a Spanish flamenco number that was behind the top two couples but enough for the

bronze medal.

Earlier, Olga Markova of Russia edged ahead of four-time champion Surya Bonaly of France after the women's short programme.

Another Russian, Olga Butyrskaya, was third in the programme that required eight basic moves, spins and jumps and counts one-third of the total score. The free programme is Saturday.

Markova, third last year, had a flowing interpretation of "Harlem Nocturne" that included the tough jump combination of triple lutz-double toe loop. The 21-year-old from Moscow scored 5.5 to 5.8 for technical merit and all 5.7s and 5.8s for presentation on a scale up to 6.0.

Bonaly was a bit off in her programme but still had second, although Markova was clearly ahead of her in the presentation mark.

Bonaly didn't see it that way. "My performance was almost perfect," Bonaly said. "But I'm not satisfied with the marks."

Bonaly's mother, Suzanne, who coaches her, disagreed with her daughter. "The performance was not perfect," Mrs. Bonaly said.

Bonaly has won the European title the last four years, twice beating Olympic champion Oksana Baiul of Ukraine. Baiul has gone professional and is not competing this year. She may be back next year if she reinstates by April 1.

Tanja Szewczenko, the German champion, was fourth with a clean programme, although all her landings were not completely smooth.

Another German contender took herself out of the running for a medal. Marina



17-year-old Russian Ilya Kulik

Kielmann of Germany, skating in her home town, slipped on the jump combination and received marks as low as 4.0 to come in 13th.

Thursday, 17-year-old newcomer Ilya Kulik of Russia held off Olympic champion Alexei Urmanov to win the men's event.

Kulik, barely two months after winning the world junior title and in his first major competition, held on to the lead he had after the short programme to take the gold medal. Urmanov rebounded from sixth to finish second overall with a dynamic and classical free skating routine that earned the only perfect 6.0 of the evening.

Breuer sets date for comeback

BONN (R) — Germany's former world 400 metres silver medalist Grit Breuer has set a date for her comeback to athletics following a doping ban.

Breuer, banned with ex-double world sprint champion Katrin Krabbe and compatriot Manuela Derr in August 1993 after they admitted taking the drug clenbuterol, said on Friday she planned to run at a meeting at her new club of Schwerin on August 25.

Derr, who has also switched to Schwerin from Krabbe's old club Neubrandenburg, is also scheduled to compete at the meeting.

Football coach's daughter dies scattering mother's ashes

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The daughter of San Diego Chargers quarterback coach Dwain Painter was swept to her death by a wave as she scattered her mother's ashes into waves along the Rocky Mendocino Coast.

The body of Debbie Menta, 32, was found Friday morning by U.S. Coast Guard rescuers.

Painter's 23-year-old son, Doug Painter, also was hurt in the freak accident trying to rescue his sister, but pulled himself to safety and was in stable condition Friday, hospital officials said.

The two were scattering the ashes of their mother, Diane Painter, who committed suicide hours after San

Diego of the National Football League won the American Football Conference Championship on Jan. 15.

Friends said Mrs. Painter, who was divorced from her husband, was upset she would not be going to the Super Bowl with him. She started her car in the garage of their home in Bellevue, Pennsylvania, and died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

"It's just a series of family tragedies," said Leo Menta, father of Debbie Menta's husband, Mark Menta, of the San Francisco suburb of Foster City. The couple have an 18-month-old son, Taylor, he said. Dwain Painter was on his way to Mendocino to be with his son.

The brother and sister were scattering the ashes at the site because Mrs. Painter had often visited Mendocino with her daughter.

"It's one of the favorite spots for the mother and her," Leo Menta said. "When the mother came out they always went up together."

On Thursday, Doug Painter was found by artist Joy Verner staggering naked along the Mendocino headlands about 120 miles (192 kilometres) north of San Francisco. "Bloody from top to bottom," she said.

Doug Painter told authorities he and his sister stood on a high rock above the ocean at Sunset Thursday to scatter the ashes of their mother.

Baseball owners drop salary cap

WASHINGTON (R) — Major League Baseball club owners have dropped a contentious salary cap imposed in December in order to move toward an agreement with players to end a crippling baseball strike, representatives of both sides said on Friday night.

Boston Red Sox chief executive John Harrington, chief negotiator for the owners, described the cap as a "distraction" and said they had agreed to scrap it effective February 6.

The owners' insistence on a salary cap was a key sticking point in talks aimed at ending the six-month strike.

Donald Fehr, the players' chief negotiator, welcomed the owners' decision.

"Obviously we're very pleased. The task now is to proceed and negotiate an agreement," he said.

The players had said they would oppose any plan by the owners to limit their salaries. The owners maintained that some controls were needed to help teams in smaller cities compete with those in bigger markets.

The action came late on the second day of talks in



John Harrington, chief executive officer of the Boston Red Sox speaks to reporters (AFP photo)

Washington to end the strike. Representatives of both sides said they expected negotiations to resume Saturday.

The walkout ended the 1994 season on August 12. President Clinton set Monday as a deadline for the two sides to show some

progress in the talks. If not, he said he would ask mediator Bill Urey to present his solution which could then be imposed by Congress.

Spring training camps are set to open in Florida and Arizona in a few days and the 1995 season is scheduled to begin in early April.

Asked what Clinton was doing to encourage an agreement before the deadline, White House spokesman Mike McCurry facetiously replied: "The president this weekend will take a 40-ounce Louisville slugger (baseball bat) to both parties and tell them to get a settlement by Monday."

McCurry said he expected the baseball talks to go right into the wire. "People I've talked to think they're going to work all the way through until Monday."

The teams have threatened to use replacement players if the strike is not settled and have been holding tryout camps.

The players went on strike to protest plans by the owners to impose the salary cap on teams to hold down rapidly rising player contracts.

The owners cancelled the rest of the season, including the World Series, in September.

Fehr told reporters Friday he had cancelled a meeting with managers and coaches Monday in Dallas so he could remain in Washington for the negotiations.

Knicks flatten 76ers; Magic, Bulls lose

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Patrick Ewing had 30 points and 15 rebounds Friday night as the New York Knicks held off the Philadelphia 76ers 106-86.

In his 12th straight game with double-digit points and rebounds, Ewing hit 12 of 14 from the field as the Knicks won their third straight and ninth in 10 games. He also had five assists.

The game was close until the final quarter. The Knicks went on a 16-4 run over the next five minutes to take control of the game for good, sending the 76ers to their 10th loss in 18 games.

Heat 105, Bulls 95: In Landover, Maryland, Billy Owens scored 30 points, matching his career high, and the Miami Heat spoiled Chris Webber's return to the Washington lineup by beating the Bulls.

Matt Geiger had 21 points and 12 rebounds for Miami, which won for just the fifth time on the road. Owens also had 12 rebounds.

Hornets 117, Bucks 98: In Charlotte, North Carolina, Muggsy Bogues scored 23 points and Scott Burrell added 20 as the Charlotte Hornets ran their winning streak to five games with a victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

The Hornets, off to their best start ever, won without a lot of offense from their big two, Larry Johnson and Alonzo Mourning. Johnson fought off double teams all night but managed 10 points and 10 assists. Mourning scored 12 points off 4-for-9 shooting.

Pacers 118, Magic 106: In Indianapolis, Rick Smith had 27 points as the Indiana Pacers dealt the Orlando Magic their second straight loss, 118-106.

Matched against Orlando centre Shaquille O'Neal, Smith came out the winner, hitting 10 of 16 from the field. O'Neal, who entered the



New York Knicks' Derek Harper (left) fumbles the ball while Clarence Weatherspoon of the 76ers looks on (AFP photo)

game averaging a league-high 29.9 points, finished with 20 points on 7-for-18 shooting.

Sonics 121, Hawks 98: In Atlanta, Gary Payton scored 22 points and Seattle hit a season-high 13 3-point baskets as the Sonics won their team-record ninth straight on the road, defeating the Atlanta Hawks.

It was the 13th victory in 15 games for the Sonics, who won in Atlanta for only the second time in their last 14 games.

Siege Smith led the Hawks, who had a two-game winning streak snapped, with 18 points and Stacey Augmon added 17.

Trail Blazers 112, Timberwolves 97: In Minneapolis,

had 20 points and Dennis Rodman got 20 rebounds to lead the San Antonio Spurs to their sixth straight victory, over the Dallas Mavericks.

Sean Elliott, Vinny Del Negro and J.R. Reid scored 16 points each for the Spurs, who had seven double-figure scorers. Avery Johnson contributed 12 points and 14 assists for San Antonio, which has won 21 of its last 26.

Jim Jackson's 22 points and Jamal Mashburn's 21 paced the Mavericks, who fell for the ninth time in their last 10 tries and dropped their seventh in a row at home.

Suns 110, Bulls 100: In Phoenix, Danny Manning scored 11 straight points in the fourth quarter to help the Phoenix Suns hold off the Chicago Bulls.

Manning, who finished with 30 points and 14 rebounds, made good on a three-point play with 6:21 left, giving the Suns a 97-90 lead, Phoenix's biggest of the game at the point.

Scottie Pippen had 28 points, 11 rebounds and five steals for Chicago.

Warriors 106, Clippers 89: In Oakland, California, Chris Gatling scored 20 points and rookie Carlos Rogers had 17 rebounds as the Golden State Warriors broke a four-game losing streak with a win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Rogers, who also scored 18 points, matched the most rebounds by a Warrior this season. Tim Hardaway had an unusual triple-double for Golden State — 15 points, 14 assists and a career-high 10 turnovers.

Terry Dehere had 13 points for the Clippers, who shot just 35 per cent in losing their fourth straight.

GOREN BRIDGE

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♣ A Q J 9

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♥ 8 3
♦ A Q 10 ♣ J 8 5 2
♠ 7 5 2 ♠ K 8 4 3

SOUTH
♠ 2
♥ K J 10 6 7 4 2
♦ K 9 3
♣ 10 6

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Saudis withdrew from border — Yemeni minister

CAIRO (Agencies) — Yemen's Foreign Minister, Abdul Karim Al Iryani said Saturday that Saudi troops had pulled back from the disputed border with his country.

"Saudi troops massed on the border with Yemen have been withdrawn," Dr. Iryani told reporters after a meeting here with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

He said he had given Mr. Mubarak a message from Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on the situation in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf region.

"I informed President Mubarak of the details of our negotiations with Saudi Arabia aimed at reaching a joint understanding concerning relations between the two countries and resolving the border dispute," he said.

"I hope negotiations on this subject between the two countries will bring hope," he added.

The two countries opened talks in Riyadh on Jan. 23 after a flare-up of tension on their border, which Yemen said was caused by Saudi Arabia massing troops and tanks along its northeast border.

The Saudis denied the reports.

The two countries are in dispute over the provinces of Najran, Jizan and Assir close to the border that were assigned to Saudi Arabia under the 1934 Taif accord.

Sanaa argues the treaty expired in September 1992 but says it is willing to renegotiate the agreement.

Dr. Iryani said a settlement would be reached "on the basis of the Taif accord and on the principles of international law."

The dispute has led to several armed clashes on the border, most recent on Jan.

10 which diplomats said left 40 Yemenis and 14 Saudis dead.

Meanwhile Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said: "The problem is not on the point of being resolved, there is a long way to go and efforts must be continued," to settle the dispute.

Yemeni and Saudi officials were due to resume talks in the Saudi capital on Saturday.

They met in Riyadh on the Thursday to discuss the dispute in line with a Syrian-brokered accord on Jan. 15 under which the two sides pledged to pull back troops rushed to the border and not to resort to force.

Officials said Dr. Iryani was to leave Cairo later on Saturday, a day before his Saudi counterpart Saud Al Faisal is due to arrive for a two-day meeting of the foreign ministers of the Damascus Declaration states.

The declaration was signed by Egypt, Syria and six Gulf states in 1991 after the Gulf war.

U.S. 'satisfied'

The United States is satisfied with Yemen's apparent expulsion of Iraqi military advisors who helped the victorious north in last year's civil war, a regional newspaper reported Saturday.

Saudi-owned Al Hayat, quoting Arab diplomats in the U.S. capital, said the move has "left satisfaction in Washington," which may lead to Yemen getting badly needed spare parts for its air force.

Yemen was unable to maintain its 11 U.S.-made F-5E fighter jets after an effective U.S. boycott caused by its sympathy for Iraq in the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, which angered the United States and the Saudi Arabian-led Gulf bloc.

New religious group has Kabul in its sights

By Herve Clerc

Agence France Presse

ISLAMABAD — A force led by ardent religious students is making huge territorial gains in Afghanistan and poses a growing threat to the mainstream mujahideen who led the 14-year holy war in the country.

Taliban, virtually unheard of six months ago, is closing in on the stronghold of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, head of Hezb-e-Islami, one of the main fundamentalist factions fighting for control of war-torn Afghanistan.

The impressively armed force makes no secret that their eventual target is Kabul and total control of the country.

Taliban are reported to control eight provinces in the south of the country and are moving into the west in Herat and toward the Pakistan frontier on the east.

"The mujahideen have spent more than two years tearing themselves apart and they will lose everything they have gained in Afghanistan," said one Islamabad-based diplomat.

The young Taliban fighters are now on the fringes of Wazirabad provincial capital, Maidan Shahr, a Hekmatyar stronghold 30 kilometres south of Kabul.

A Defence Ministry official in Kabul told AFP that a 1,500-strong force of Taliban and their mujahideen allies, advanced late Thursday to a river south of Maidan Shahr. On Friday the force pushed on to the city limits.

They broke the old frontline, and now Maidan Shahr is now under serious threat, said the official.

Taliban has become a major player with Mr. Hekmatyar and President Burhanuddin Rabbani since taking Kandahar from mujahideen commanders last autumn.

The movement has grown from a hard core of 800 disaffected theology students to around 25,000 men. Diplomatic sources said they have enormous amounts of arms and ammunition, including 200 tanks, 100 of which are operational, and a dozen MIG-21 fighters.

Mainly educated at Koranic schools in Pakistan, the

Taliban fighters have won support from ordinary Afghans, frustrated and tired by the anarchy that has torn the country apart since the fall of the communist government in 1992.

Local chieftains have helped their takeover of large chunks of territory.

The movement began with the 800 fundamentalist students who launched a call for an "Islamic revolution" throughout Afghanistan.

In areas they control, women must wear veils and are restricted from working. Drug traffickers have been chased away and Islamic punishment established.

Despite denials from Islamabad, which is officially neutral in Afghan affairs, experts and diplomats are convinced Pakistan supports the Taliban movement.

Islamabad's aim is to reestablish stability in southern Afghanistan and to reopen a commercial route between Pakistan and Central Asia, analysts say.

To support their war effort, the Taliban are starting to recruit, particularly in Pakistan, technicians and engineers to repair damaged material, rebuild bridges and reopen roads.

The irony is that Mr. Hekmatyar is considered a "protégé" of the Pakistan government. According to some analysts, Mr. Hekmatyar has the support of the secret service, ISI, while the Taliban is supported by Interior Minister Nasrullah Babar.

Mr. Rabbani and his faction seems ready to play the Taliban card against their arch-rival Hekmatyar.

The Defence Ministry official said the Wazirabad towns of Sayyadabad, Jargatu and Sheikhabad had been captured from Hezb-e-Islami in the new Taliban advance.

Maidan Shahr is connected by road to Mr. Hekmatyar's Charasiab headquarters, which are located 25 kilometres south of Kabul.

The Taliban could press an attack against Mr. Hekmatyar's headquarters if they are not held by Hezb-e-Islami fighters at Maidan Shahr.



King hosts Zarqa notables

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Saturday hosted an affair in honour of tribal leaders and representatives of public and private institutions in Zarqa Governorate.

The banquet was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Shari Zaid Al Shaker, members of the royal family, Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasbi, the King's advisors and Interior Minister Saleh Hamad.

The banquet was also attended by Omani Minister of Foreign Affairs Youssef Ben Alawi, who was on a visit to Jordan.

The King and the guests performed Al Maghreb prayers together.

Pyongyang says no deal if exercises held

SEOUL (AP) — North Korea threatened Saturday to pull out of its nuclear deal with Washington if the United States holds its annual spring military exercise with South Korea.

North Korea calls the "Team Spirit" exercises a rehearsal for an invasion and in the past has protested by cancelling talks on improving relations.

In past years, about 100,000 U.S. and South Korean troops have participated.

"The implementation of the agreed (nuclear) framework would be unthinkable if a belligerent party staged a massive military rehearsal against the other side," the North's official Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) said, quoting from the Communist Party newspaper Rodong Simun.

The exercises would also "spoil the atmosphere of détente on the Korean Peninsula and lead the situation back to the extreme pitch of strain," KCNA said.

The U.S.-North Korea agreement in October halted North Korea's nuclear programme, suspected of being used to make atomic weapons. In turn, the United States promised to help the North build safer nuclear reactors and establish diplomatic relations.

But subsequent talks on working out the details of the nuclear deal have reportedly bogged down, with North Korea refusing to accept a South Korean replacement reactor.

South Korea has said it would pay the bulk of the \$4 billion tag for the new reactors, but only if they are South Korean models.

North Korea has also been refusing to reopen inter-Korean talks, also required under the October nuclear agreement.

"Team Spirit" is normally held in March or April but was cancelled last year to avoid jeopardising U.S.-North Korea nuclear negotiations. The nuclear pact did not ban the exercise from taking place this year.

The exercises focus on defensive preparations.

Also Saturday, South Korea

rean Foreign Minister Gong Ro-Myung left for the United States and Japan to discuss the progress of the nuclear agreement.

In Washington, Mr. Gong is to review the nuclear situation with U.S. counterpart Warren Christopher and Defence Secretary William Perry.

Mr. Gong will also fly to New York for talks with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali before proceeding to Tokyo, where he will meet with Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono.

North and South Korea fought against each other during the 1950-53 Korean war and are still technically at war because they never signed a peace treaty.

In Washington, a top official said Friday the United States was warning North Korea to stop trying to freeze South Korea out of the thawing relations between Washington and Pyongyang.

"North Korea should understand... that the processes of North Korean-U.S. relations and their development must proceed in parallel with the North-South dialogue" about the future of the Korean Peninsula, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott told a Friday news conference.

"Clearly, if the North-South dialogue remains as I'm afraid it is now — frozen — that will be inconsistent with... the principle of parallelism which guides our policy," he said.

It would also violate the Oct. 21 agreement in which the United States and North Korea agreed to improve relations while Pyongyang dismantled its suspected nuclear programme, Mr. Talbott added.

Mr. Talbott said he assured South Korean officials during his Asian trip last month that Washington was insisting on "parallelism."

Seoul's concerns will be discussed with Mr. Gong, Mr. Talbott said.

Mr. Talbott also said the United States was insisting that the light-water reactors North Korea will get to replace its aging graphite nuclear reactors come from South Korea.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait foreign minister to tour Europe

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The Kuwaiti foreign minister is to tour Europe this month in a bid to rally support for maintaining United Nations sanctions on Iraq, the Foreign Ministry said Saturday. Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah is to visit Britain and France, two of the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members. He will also visit Germany, Italy and the Czech Republic, the Foreign Ministry official said, without giving dates for the tour. The Kuwaiti minister last week visited Oman after the sultanate argued for an easing of the sanctions on Iraq. Of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates — only Saudi Arabia and Kuwait favour maintaining existing sanctions on Iraq.

Egyptian policeman killed

CAIRO (AP) — Suspected Muslim extremists killed a policeman and wounded six people in an attack Saturday on a patrolling police car in southern Egypt. Four suspected militants started shooting at the police car in Mallawi, 260 kilometres south of Cairo on Saturday morning. The driver was immediately killed and six others in the car were wounded and taken to a hospital. Security sources in Mallawi, who declined to be further identified, said the six wounded were policemen. Interior Ministry officials in Cairo said one civilian and five policemen were wounded. It was not immediately clear why the accounts differed. Police rounded up 17 suspects after the attack, the sources in Mallawi said.

9 die in Maltese dry dock blast

VALLETTA (R) — Nine workers died and at least 20 were injured when a Libyan chemical tanker being repaired in a Maltese dry dock exploded, police said on Saturday. The explosion, ripped through the 3,000-tonne Um Al Farud, being repaired at dry docks in Senglea some 12 kilometres south of the Maltese capital Valletta, at about midnight (2300 GMT Friday). An official statement released by Maltese Interior Minister Louis Galea said that the explosion had been caused by a build-up of leaking gas in the hold of the ship. There was no cargo on board the ship when the blast occurred.

Turkey's pro-Kurdish newspaper folds

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey's leading pro-Kurdish newspaper said on Saturday an Istanbul court had forced it to close down. Staff at Ozcir Ullke said they closed the newspaper late on Friday, after deciding the court's rulings essentially made the paper illegal and it would be impossible to continue. The court had earlier ordered the confiscation of Thursday's and Friday's editions, ruling that the newspaper was the same as the pro-Kurdish Ozcir Gundem paper shut down last April on charges of making separatist propaganda.

Air controllers avert collision of jets

LISBON (AP) — Lisbon's airport traffic controllers managed to stop the takeoff of a KLM passenger jet Friday to avert a possible collision with a military plane. Portugal's airport and air traffic authority said the Dutch carrier's Airbus 310 bound for Amsterdam was ready for takeoff when a Portuguese military Hercules C-130 took off from a nearby runway without receiving control tower clearance. The airport authority said air traffic controllers ordered the KLM crew to bring the Airbus to a halt in time to avoid a possible crash. "This incident, happily without consequences, allows us to confirm that the safety systems work," the airport authority said in a written statement.

Somalis hold 14 aid staff hostage

MOGADISHU (AFP) — A group of armed former Somali employees of the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) on Saturday barricaded 14 foreign workers in their compound in southern Mogadishu following a dispute over payment.

A fifteenth member of the aid team, a Sudanese woman, was allowed to leave by the Somalis because she was fasting for the Holy Month of Ramadan and wished to return home.

Among those held is the team's Italian leader Ferdinando Zanusso, who said the dispute had erupted two days ago, but had its origins in events in 1992 that he said were settled in 1993.

The captives comprise three Americans, one Afghan, one Australian, a Canadian, an Indian, two Italians, including Zanusso, a Briton, a man from Denmark, an Irishman, a South African and a Sudanese.

U.N. spokesman George Bennett said negotiations between the WFP and the Somali gunmen were underway in an attempt to resolve the dispute.

An official from the Somali National Alliance (SNA) faction of warlord Mohammed Farah Aideded told journalists that progress was being made in negotiations with the gunmen, but he declined to elaborate.

Mr. Zanusso said the dispute started in 1992 when the U.S.-led U.N. operation in Somalia took over the running of the sea port and sacked Somali guards hired by the WFP.

"We gave them extra food on their contract termination," Mr. Zanusso said. He added: "The security of the international staff is the indisputable responsibility of Somali elders and faction leaders claiming responsibility for their respective areas."

But Abdullah Aghdere, a spokesman for the militiamen ringing the compound and its demoralised occupants, told reporters that there had been no settlement of the dispute. He said the rights of about 1,000 local employees of the WFP had been violated and they were owed several months' back pay.

Roads leading to the WFP building were blocked on several occasions in the past for similar reasons.

Mr. Zanusso was instrumental in securing the release last month of Rudy Maro, a French worker with a humanitarian group, held by Somalis for 37 days.

The detention of the aid workers comes as the U.N. force has pulled back to Mogadishu's port and airport prior to pulling out of the war-ravaged Horn of Africa country.

Mounting insecurity has forced the U.N. to bring forward the evacuation of its staff from Somalia. U.N. employees are to be moved out of Somalia by Feb. 14, well ahead of the March 31 deadline set earlier (see page 2).

COLUMN

Corruption row hits U.K.'s house of lords

LONDON (R) — Britain's upper house of parliament, the House of Lords, was hit by allegations that members took money from lobbyists in return for asking questions on their behalf during law-making sessions. Opposition Liberal Democrat Lord Lester, a top human rights lawyer, made the claim in a secret submission to a lords committee investigating the financial affairs of peers. In the document, published by London's Evening Standard newspaper, Lord Lester said: "One of my commercial clients at the bar has informed me that he has paid substantial sums and given direct financial benefits to some four peers, as well as several members of the House of Commons, to take other action on behalf of him and his company. 'None of them declared this interest to either house.' The lower house of parliament, the Commons, was hit last year by 'cash-for-questions' allegations. It has been asked to pass a law forbidding lawmakers to take money from lobbyists."

Czar's burial postponed pending U.S. research

MOSCOW (AP) — The remains of Czar Nicholas II and his family will not be buried next month as planned because authorities want to conduct further genetic tests, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported. The report said additional testing of the remains of the czar's younger brother, George, is needed for comparison to remove all doubts about the identity of the czar's remains. George's body was exhumed last year from St. Petersburg's Peter and Paul Cathedral, but comparative research has not started, ITAR-TASS said. It cited Vladimir Solovoyov of the chief prosecutor's office, which is conducting the investigation. Sophisticated equipment necessary for the research could not be found in Russia, Mr. Solovoyov was quoted as saying, and it was decided to send the samples to a research centre in the United States. Czar Nicholas II abdicated in 1917, and he and his family were held prisoner at a royal compound outside St. Petersburg, then known as Petrograd. Later, the Bolsheviks moved them to the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg, where they were herded into a basement and killed on the night of July 16-17, 1918. Remains were discovered in a pit outside Yekaterinburg in 1991 which forensic experts, including some British scholars, identified as the czar, his wife and three of their daughters. Russian authorities have said they want to conduct all possible research before interring the remains in Peter and Paul's, the resting place of czars since Peter the Great. The report did not say when the burial would take place.

Nurse suspected of murdering patients

TREUCHTLINGEN, Germany (AFP) — A nurse from this southern German town has been detained on suspicion of administering lethal doses of medicine to an 85-year-old patient, and could be accused of causing other deaths, a judicial official said. The Bavarian official said that the 40-year-old nurse's clinic informed prosecutors last month that she had been behaving "incorrectly" by handing out the medicine in June 1994. The nurse has not commented on the case and no motive has been mentioned. Investigators were seeking to determine whether she could be blamed for the deaths of other patients, the official added. According to the mass circulation Bild newspaper, the nurse may be responsible for the deaths of 24 patients, which would be the largest such case ever recorded in Germany. Five years ago, a Wuppertal nurse was sentenced to 11 years in prison for giving five patients lethal injections. Two years ago an orderly from Bielefeld was given 15 years in jail for killing 10 patients.